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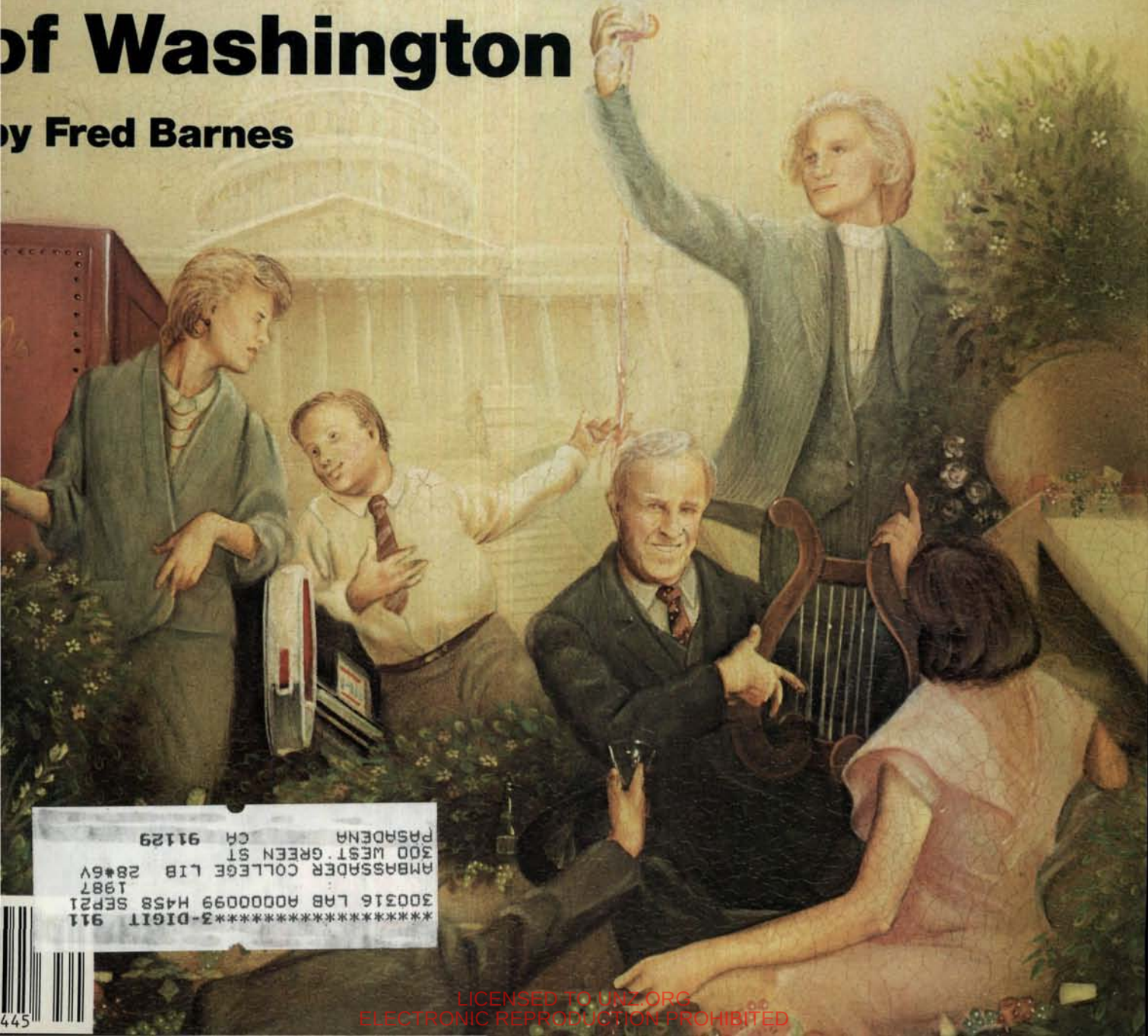
THE NEW REPUBLIC

JUL 14 1986

The New Parasite Culture of Washington

by Fred Barnes



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...great revolutions..." *"We know lots of revolutions, great revolutions, and magnificent people, who after taking over power, produced systems that were much worse than the ones they destroyed. We don't want to make this mistake. We will not."*

--Polish Solidarity leader Lech Walesa in a "Morning Edition" interview in Gdansk, Poland, with National Public Radio's European correspondent Neal Conan.

"I never share blame, I never share credit, and I never share desserts. It's just not my style."

--Beverly Sills, New York City Opera general director, in an interview on National Public Radio's "Morning Edition."

"Drunk they (the Russians) defeated Napoleon. Drunk they beat Hitler. Drunk they could win against NATO."

--Edward Luttwak, defense analyst and author of "The Pentagon and the Art of War," talking with National Public Radio's "Morning Edition" host Bob Edwards about Soviet military strength.

"We are so different, and yet, we are all one." *"I've never seen so many women, of so many different ages, colors, sizes and shapes, and I think it's amazing. We are so different, and yet, we are all one."*

--A delegate to the United Nations' World Conference on Women, talking with National Public Radio's "All Things Considered" co-host Susan Stamberg in Nairobi, Kenya.

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FROM WASHINGTON

THE PURPOSE OF PRIVACY

Free speech is right there in the Constitution. Sodomy is not. Nevertheless, in the Supreme Court term that just ended, liberals cheered the Court for allowing the government to ban certain kinds of advertising, and booed the Court for allowing the government to ban homosexual sodomy. Meanwhile Justice Byron White, whose decision in the sodomy case incorporates a sermonette about the danger of activist judges overturning government policies with "ancient roots," also wrote the decision authorizing judges to overturn extreme partisan gerrymandering—a practice with equally ancient roots in our republic.

Then there's the Reagan administration, which usually can be heard carrying on about federalism and getting the government off people's backs, but now is heard fretting about the Court's repeated refusal to interfere with private and local government affirmative action plans. Finally, on the last day of the term, we have four justices who had joined White's plea against activism in the sodomy case (led by Chief Justice Warren Burger, in his swan song) voting to toss out the most important piece of legislation of the past year, the Gramm-Rudman budget act, because of a never-used technicality in a 65-year-old law about who can fire the comptroller general.

The point isn't that everyone's a hypocrite when it comes to the Constitution, though that's pretty close to being true. The point is that the purpose of having a Constitution in a democracy is to use it from time to time, and using it means judges thwarting the will of the majority. If a majority already supports something, invoking the Constitution is redundant.

A "restrainer" can win the first round of almost any constitutional argument by saying, "show me where it says anything about 'x' "—sodomy, gerrymandering, advertising—"in the Constitution." But this gets tiresome. Even the basic principle of judicial review—the power of judges to throw out laws they find unconstitutional—is not obvious from the plain words of the document itself. It was an initial bold act of interpretation by John Marshall in 1803 that has since evolved into a tradition and an institution, in a process that conservatives especially should feel comfortable with. This isn't a license for judges to do whatever they want under the Constitution. It's simply a recognition that they must do *something*.

Given the need for some amount of literary exegesis in interpreting the Constitution, it's not so farfetched to find a protection of sexual privacy in the Fifth Amendment's magisterial invocation of "liberty," combined with the Fourth Amendment's quite specific assertion of a "right of the people to be secure in their persons [and] houses . . . against unreasonable searches and seizures." On the other hand, it may not be impossibly stinting to see these grand phrases as applying only to political freedoms and criminal procedures.

What *is* logically impossible is the law as the Court now leaves it, under which the Constitution protects people's right to practice birth control, miscegenation, abortion, and even perhaps (according to a footnote in the most recent case) heterosexual sodomy, but not homosexual sodomy. Justice White quotes some pretty flowery phrases about why the Constitution applies to one thing and not another. But I would love to hear his explanation of how heterosexual sodomy is "implicit in the concept of ordered liberty such that neither liberty nor justice would exist if [it] were sacrificed," whereas homosexual sodomy is not.

Of course you have to draw the line somewhere. But in extending the reach of constitutionally protected sexual privacy, this is a very bad line to draw. Just as in the area of free speech, you don't need the Constitution to protect what's conventional and popular. You need it to protect what's unconventional and unpopular. A constitutional protection that only applies to opinions or sexual practices that aren't offensive to the majority is worthless.

This ruling makes the Court's notorious 1973 abortion decision look even more bizarre. (Maybe that's the idea.) Unlike abortion, sodomy between consenting adults in private involves no even arguable harm to any third party. Justice White doesn't even attempt to explain what legitimate, let alone compelling, interest the state might have in preventing it. The abortion decision plunged the Court into a morass of regulatory detail involving pregnancy trimesters and questions of fetal movement—implausible matters to find in the Constitution. A plain declaration that private sexual practices are no one else's business, by contrast, would have the classic constitutional virtues of clarity and simplicity. Finally, the abortion decision actually did run roughshod over the policies of many states. Sodomy laws, by contrast, are virtually unenforced. Ironically, for all of White's talk about "deeply rooted" taboos, our society has already made its decision about private consensual sodomy.

In his eloquent dissent, Justice Blackmun quotes a famous dissent by Justice Brandeis. This case is not about a right to commit sodomy, he says, but rather about "the right most valued by civilized men, the right to be left alone." That's pretty good. But I think the Court came closer to the real issue in its 1967 decision invalidating state laws against miscegenation (also widespread and "deeply rooted" at the time), when it invoked an even more famous phrase: "the pursuit of happiness." During the Liberty Weekend hoo-ha, I heard two conservative commentators on TV invoking this beautiful phrase as a justification for some of the celebratory excesses. But if the right to pursue happiness only extends as far as celebrating liberty too hard on the Fourth of July, what we're celebrating isn't very meaningful.

The right to pursue happiness is held to be "self-evident." Equally self-evident—as every member of the Supreme Court surely knows from personal experience—is that the pursuit of happiness is not an easy one. It's hard to be happy. That's why if a person, or two people, or three people and a billy goat find a way to be happy that strikes most other people as peculiar, or even revolting, that's hardly reason enough for the government to thwart them. They're only trying to find an answer to the question we're all trying to answer in our own ways.

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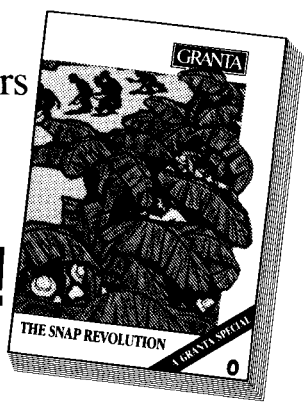

The Snap Revolution by James Fenton
In the Philippines

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CORRESPONDENCE

JEWISH PACS REDEFINED

To the editors:

Judging from the size of the scare headline on your May 26 cover ("Unholy Alliance"), with the Elders of Zion subhead, you plan to merchandise TNR at supermarket checkout counters alongside those newspapers with the 80-point heads informing shoppers that Elvis is alive and being held as a love-slave on another planet.

How can one take this seriously? It was clear that what TNR calls "Jewish PACs" could never fulfill the role assigned to them by the subhead. In the 1983-84 election cycle, PACs contributed to congressional campaigns a total of $273.2 million. Common Cause reported that "pro-Israel" PACs contributed $3,372,392—1.2 percent of the total.

Let's assume, for the sake of argument, that for 1985-86 the pro-Israel PACs double their giving. With 435 House races and 34 Senate contests, if you can believe that $7 million out of $273 million is going to "save" the Republican Senate, then, as the Duke of Wellington said, you can believe anything.

However, out of a combination of Jewish paranoia and Jewish masochism, I plowed through the article. Robert Kuttner writes well, and I enjoy his pieces on economics. But when he wanders into the Jewish community, he is lost.

Although American Jews continue to lead the charge on most liberal issues, the Jewish community—taking on the characteristics of the larger society—has grown more pluralist. Mr. Kuttner has evidently been persuaded that "traditional Jewish values" reside exclusively in the "liberal agenda." Posturing is the object of the exercise.

In New York, Mr. Kuttner says, these Israel-obsessed Jews refused to dump the powerfully supportive Republican Senator D'Amato and to throw their weight behind Democratic hopeful Arthur Levitt, the president of the American Stock Exchange, who had heretofore controlled his passion for Jewish and liberal causes. The Jews were supposed to pour millions into a kamikaze effort and be left with an inevitably victorious and understandably resentful Senator D'Amato. Mr. Levitt should thank Howard Squadron and Kenneth Bialkin for flagging him off and saving him money and humiliation.

In Wisconsin, candidate Herbert Kohl did indeed receive "a similar message: stay out." Mr. Kuttner strongly implies that he got this "message" from the Jews. He didn't; he got it from the polls.

In Kansas, Mr. Kuttner would have Dan Glickman give up a House seat and growing seniority to run against Bob Dole, the Senate majority leader—hardly a remunerative use of PAC money. If we're going to talk "Jewish values" and the separation of church and state, then Bob Packwood of Oregon deserves our support. He won narrowly against his primary opponent, a Baptist minister who waged an anti-abortion campaign, an issue on which Packwood was vulnerable, while the likely Democratic candidate, Ron Wyden, is already criticizing Packwood for supporting foreign aid. How should a pro-Israel PAC call this one?

It is unforgivable to cite Rudy Boschwitz's support of Steve Symms as a case "where Republican Jewish leaders have donned their AIPAC hats in order to pitch for right-wing GOP incumbents." Like half of the Jewish senators, Rudy is a Republican, and his effectiveness with his colleagues requires that he support Republicans. To characterize this as "donning his AIPAC hat" is disingenuous.

Support for Israel is, and must remain, nonpartisan and bipartisan. You can call Jewish support for righteous Republican legislators an "unholy alliance" only if you misread the history of American-Israeli relations.

Political philosophies and party labels do little to determine U.S.-Israel relations. If the Carter regime was rough on the right-wing Begin government, the Reagan White House was even rougher. President Reagan castigated Begin and withheld promised fighter planes. The current American-Israeli honeymoon—real strategic cooperation, augmented foreign aid, Haifa as a U.S. Navy port—came with the premiership of socialist Shimon Peres and his close relationship with former Bechtel head George Shultz, approved by Secretary Shultz's right-wing boss.

Mr. Kuttner has rewritten history to assert a conflict between traditional Jewish values and political support for Israel, a conflict he says has "served to move Jewish interest-group activities to the right of the Jewish electorate." In reality, while some pro-Israel PACs may indeed have moved to the right of the Jewish left, support of Israel persists as the critical, central consensus value for the Jewish electorate.

ROBERT A. RIESMAN
Providence, Rhode Island

CITIZEN WELLES

To the editors:

Because of traveling, I have just now seen Frank Mankiewicz's letter in your April 7 issue concerning my book *The Making of Citizen Kane*. Mankiewicz asserts, "There is not one scrap of paper on which a word of script written or claimed to have been written by Welles exists." In fact, there is elaborate evidence on this issue. I presented it in full in the Winter 1978 issue of *Critical Inquiry*, "The Scripts of *Citizen Kane*." I traced the entire evolution of the script through seven full drafts and made the case for the nature and extent of Welles's involvement in the scripting. Since Mankiewicz's people at National Public Radio asked me for a copy of it when they were preparing an "All Things Considered" Welles feature in 1982, I had assumed he was familiar with it. In any case, I would like to acknowledge the generous cooperation I received from the Mankiewicz family in the course of my research.

ROBERT CARRINGER
Urbana, Illinois

THEATRICAL POLITICS

To the editors:

Robert Brustein's perceptive review of the Robert Wilson production of Heiner Müller's *Hamletmachine* at NYU ("Advanced Machines," June 16) stopped short of dealing with the real question of politics—theatrical and in the "real" world.

To call Robert Wilson "apolitical" is misleading and inadequate: in its rigorous aesthetizing of his private "storehouse of dream images," his work is *anti*-political. This does not lessen the effectiveness of his collaboration with Müller's text, but it does raise important

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
JULY 28, 1986

DEMOCRATS AND COMANDANTES

Three years ago, when the administration asked Congress for military assistance to the new government of José Napoleón Duarte in El Salvador, the Democratic congressional opposition warned that this entanglement inevitably would lead to direct U.S. military intervention. And it wouldn't surprise us if today, in places like Berkeley and Madison and the Upper West Side of Manhattan, where many educated citizens can't distinguish between their own phobic prophecies and subsequent political developments, you could see bumper stickers demanding, "U.S. out of El Salvador."

But the United States isn't in El Salvador. Instead, what has happened there because of U.S. military and other aid should cheer all who welcome the strengthening of the democratic center in Central America. The terrorist left no longer operates quite so freely in urban locales, and its behavior in rural areas is evermore frantic, reflecting a general decline in support among the campesinos. In fact, popular support for the guerrillas has declined so dramatically that their political cadres are afraid to enter into talks proposed by the government. Meanwhile, the once-popular terrorist right of Roberto d'Aubuisson has been electorally repudiated. The military and the police, which rightist thugs once dominated, are slowly but meaningfully becoming more professional and apolitical.

Let us not exaggerate the achievements. Conflicts between Duarte and the labor movement have intensified over real economic issues in a very austere economy. But—unlike in Nicaragua—there are free trade unions, and Communist trade unions too. The Communists have been exploiting widespread unhappiness over the government's stringent economic measures, and this is likely to weaken Duarte. He also has lacked the confidence to bring the death squads to justice, although he already has cashiered some officers responsible for the blood they shed.

El Salvador today is not yet a model democracy. But it is also not run by ruthless reactionaries or by equally ruthless revolutionaries, which was the choice Salvadorans faced before the United States determined to help them find a middle way. The Democrats are fortunate that the American electorate's memory is short. For the party leadership was quite willing to let El Salvador fall unnoticed and unlamented to the armed doctrine of revolution. Instead, however tentatively and precariously, El Salvador is a democracy in the process of becoming, and it is therefore a big credit on Ronald Reagan's ledger—and also on the ledger of moderate Democrats who weren't afraid to cross the partisan line.

Democracy in the process of becoming is what distinguishes El Salvador from Nicaragua. Nicaragua had a democratic revolution, a popular insurrection against a corrupt authoritarian dynasty. But even as the *comandantes* installed themselves in Managua's Casa de Gobierno in July 1979, this nascent democracy was already in the process of being betrayed. For some of the Sandinistas, betrayal had been their intent from the beginning, validated by theory and a dozen times in practice: to come to power on the wave of popular resentments and hopes and quickly to turn that power into a ruthless instrument of social control. Cuba, East Germany, and Bulgaria provided models and advisers. The genuine democrats among the anti-Somoza forces went into opposition (such opposition as was permitted) or into exile. Allied with Miskito Indian victims of the revolutionaries, these heroic men and women want to retrieve their revolution.

But politics never allows pure choice, not even in the choice of comrades. Some in the leadership of the *contra* coalition, especially those with more men under arms, were unsavory. These were the elements the Reagan administration instinctively turned to when it began its active opposition to the ruling junta of Daniel Ortega. And these elements also are a part of the rationale for the refusal by most Democrats in Congress to aid the resistance.

This refusal may be politically expedient. Polls show that the people have no relish for this struggle that they scarcely understand. But it is not the function of the legislators merely to mirror sentiment. They are commended also to lead and to take risks. A few of the Democrats have done so: Sam Nunn and Bill Bradley in the Senate; Ike Skelton, Les Aspin, Dave McCurdy, and Richard Ray in the House. These Democrats also rightly insisted that if the goal is to create the preconditions for democracy, supplying arms to

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the Nicaraguan rebels without supplying more economic assistance in the region would be less than futile. The result is a proposed addition of $300 million in non-military aid.

When the history of the American debates over Nicaragua is written, moreover, a handful of young Democratic intellectuals and activists—Robert Leiken, Bernard Aronson, Bruce Cameron, and Penn Kemble—will be found to have transformed both public discussion and public policy. The Reagan administration's reflex was to rely on the most conservative and most compromised opponents of Sandinismo. As a result, it was about to lose the political battle. These Democrats and their allies in the Congress persuaded and cajoled, even forced, the recalcitrant Reaganites to recognize the need for democratic consolidation and civilian ascendancy among the *contras*. This remains the prerequisite for the continued support of the administration's Nicaraguan policy by centrist Democrats. It follows logically from the alliance with Duarte in El Salvador, an alliance that still offends Reagan's ultras.

This commitment was expressed not just as a tactic but as a principle in Reagan's speech on June 24, which Speaker Tip O'Neill prevented him from delivering to the House and which Reagan's nervous retainers prevented him from delivering properly to the nation. The address contains an historic mea culpa regarding our country's habitual disdain for democratic possibilities in Central America. This mea culpa did not go far enough. But even the most hardened right-wingers will find it difficult to retreat from the democratic norms Reagan's speech establishes. Reagan's new rhetoric represents a coming to grips with realities in Nicaragua as well as political realities on Capitol Hill. It takes courage to become a dissident in increasingly totalitarian Nicaragua, and such courage will not be mustered for other than true democrats. Whether or not Ronald Reagan is comfortable with these scrupulous democrats and reformers—people such as Violetta Chamorro, Arturo Cruz, Adolfo Calero, Alfonso Robelo, and Cardinal Obando y Bravo—they are America's only plausible allies.

THESE PEOPLE, their grievances, and their aspirations are exactly the sort that should engage the Democratic Party. Their faith that Democrats and liberals would ultimately rally to their cause is a stirring tribute to the party's historical image, and a reproach to its present cynical canons. The oft-asserted principle of nonintervention does not really guide the party's Nicaragua policy. There are Democrats, including some in Congress, who positively identify with the Sandinistas, their social designs, their political ends, and even their hostility to the United States. These few exercise leverage in Congress not unlike the sway held by single-issue militants in party primaries. In recent months some of these political figures have been lacing their apologetics with self-protective boilerplate: "We have no illusions about the Sandinistas . . ." Nevertheless, they cling to every shard of democratic promise, hoping that somehow the Directorate will rescue them from their own fatuous rhetoric.

Most Democrats, to be sure, don't share this left-wing perspective. Some, like Senator John Kerry and Representative Tom Harkin, are disposed to see every foreign entanglement as a re-enactment of their own Vietnam trauma or are simply willing to risk long-term disaster to gain short-term popularity. This leads them to assure us that if Nicaragua ever were to become a Soviet base, like Cuba, that would be the occasion for American intervention. What a reckless posture. Why would anyone consciously seek a potential big-power confrontation on the order of the Cuban missile crisis when prudent and early pressure on Nicaragua would foreclose the possibility?

And some Democrats concentrate on side issues. Representative Michael Barnes has now fixed his opposition to *contra* aid on the rebels' loose cash accounting methods. For others it's the drug traffic. These would be legitimate issues if they were being raised for their own sake and in order to strengthen the rebels' political legitimacy. But Barnes would not vote for aid to the democratic resistance fighters if they employed Coopers and Lybrand to handle their accounting and were led by the Sisters of Mercy.

THE STRUGGLE among the Nicaraguans is over the fate of freedom in their country. We have a stake in the outcome of that struggle. Part of our stake is that if Sandinismo is defeated, it must not be replaced by a system that belies and betrays our democratic commitments. But Nicaragua is not the only stake. There is no denying that if Sandinismo had been contented to play itself out inside Nicaragua, it would not be the political drama it has become in our country. But purely domestic Sandinismo is an oxymoron. Its alliance with the Soviet Union is of its very essence, an expression of its collective *amour propre*. The survival of Sandinismo will have palpable consequences for Nicaragua's neighbors. Mexico is one of these neighbors. We are another. These consequences are built into the design of "revolutionary internationalism." This is the stake the Democrats prefer to ignore or wish away.

To Speaker O'Neill in particular, the issue is less "who rules in Central America?" than "Who rules in the House of Representatives?" O'Neill has been stung by his frequent defeats in his own chamber. On Nicaragua, O'Neill wants so badly to wound his nemesis Ronald Reagan that the real issues at stake count for very little. The speaker is hardly more able than the president to grasp the complexities of foreign affairs. His views on Central America tend to be simple and sentimental. He confesses to having been strongly influenced by the Maryknoll sisters, left-wing missionaries who are enthusiastic supporters of the Sandinista government. One of his aunts was a founding member of the order. With these gentle marching orders of the spirit in hand, the speaker is planning political revenge against Democrats like Les Aspin who cannot be said to have voted other than their consciences on *contra* aid.

In the meantime, the Sandinista program for monopolizing power continues. *La Prensa*, the brave voice of freedom against Somoza, has finally been silenced. With the printing press now wholly under its control, the Sandinista regime has intensified its efforts to subordinate the Catho-

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lic Church. A top aide to Cardinal Obando has been denied re-entry into his native land. Bishop Pablo Antonio Vega, once labeled by Somoza the "Communist bishop," has been expelled from the country with the chilling official insult that he "does not deserve to be a Nicaraguan." (Chilling and resonant. When the people disagree with the government, Brecht tartly suggested after demonstrations against East German communism in 1953, the government should "dissolve the people and elect another.") The Sandinistas are not content to have captured the organs of the state. Like good Marxist-Leninists they want to control every sphere of society. That is what totalitarianism is about.

With President Reagan's solemn pledge to the congressional Democrats who defied their party's leadership by supporting *contra* aid, U.S. policy toward Nicaragua has entered a new phase. The Democrats who went out on a limb had better make sure that the administration keeps its promise to support democracy as ardently as it opposes Sandinismo. This is a promise on which not just Democrats in the United States, but democrats in Nicaragua and all of Central America, will now depend.

Better Than Baker

The money it's going to take to keep Latin America solvent can only come from three sources: (1) the United States, other Western governments, and the multilateral lending agencies Western taxpayers support; (2) the Latin countries themselves; or (3) the commercial banks that loaned the money in the first place. So far, the first two have been stuck with the tab. Debtor countries have gotten new credits from the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank in exchange for adopting economic austerity measures. These measures enable them to keep up interest payments to the banks but punish their already impoverished citizens.

And neither taxpayers north of the border nor campesinos south of it have gotten much in return for their sacrifice. Austerity measures have dried up what were once markets for the goods American workers produce. Latin countries are no longer able to sustain economic growth. Meanwhile, falling oil prices once again have brought Mexico near the brink of default. There is still an ominous possibility that a major debtor, or a group of them, may simply say "enough" and repudiate the debts.

Faced with the failure of the debt policy that the Reagan administration has followed up to now, Treasury Secretary James Baker introduced a new plan last October. Billed as a comprehensive solution to the debt crisis, the Baker plan called for $9 billion in new lending by the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to Latin countries over the next three years and $20 billion in new commercial bank lending. The conditions for these new credits would emphasize free markets rather than austerity. Debtor countries would have to trim their bloated state sectors, stop protecting inefficient firms from import competition, and open up to foreign investment. But the Baker plan has never really gotten off the ground. Even if the new credits it offered were sufficient—which they probably weren't—relieving the debt burden by piling on more debt is a dubious idea. Nationalistic Latin governments bristled at making specific economic reforms a condition of U.S. aid, especially given the harsh austerity they've already had imposed on them. In any case, commercial banks were reluctant to throw another $20 billion worth of good money after bad.

Senator Bill Bradley of New Jersey has a better idea. His proposal for the debt problem also would have the World Bank and development banks boost lending by $9 billion over the next three years. But instead of counting on commercial banks to lend more money, Bradley would require them to slice three percentage points off both the interest and principal Latin debtors owe. (Government lenders would take the same hit.) That's $57 billion worth of relief over the next three years, $42 billion of which would come out of the bankers' pockets. Countries would still have to make internal reforms to qualify, but the specific measures would be left up to them.

This has the advantage of actually reducing the debt burden the Latin countries carry, rather than just providing them with an opportunity to go deeper into hock. We're not sure that it's really possible for the sclerotic Latin economies to get growing again without taking some of the market-oriented steps the Baker plan would have required. It may well be, however, that the countries are more likely to act if they feel the decisions are their own. And with the poor already squeezed dry, maybe Latin governments would take advantage of Bradley aid to go after the biggest untapped source of funds in their society: the billions in capital flight dollars their elites have socked away in U.S. and other foreign banks.

But best of all, the Bradley proposal would finally make the commercial banks pay their share of the cost of managing the debt crisis. Back in the 1970s, the banks were only too happy to lend Latin America all the money it wanted, but they have so far managed to stick others with the losses they deserve for their folly. It's way past time for the banks to pay their share, and the Bradley plan would make them do so. After all, a round of defaults is a bigger threat to them than to anyone else.

After Liberty Weekend

Although this journal has been more than a little skeptical about the corporate fund-raising campaign to rebuild the Statue of Liberty and the hoopla surrounding its unveiling, even the grinches of TNR recognize a powerful national spirit at work in the Liberty Weekend celebrations. The question for those who have promoted and exploited this spirit—most especially our nation's political leaders—is whether they will allow it to be dissipated in empty vainglory or whether they will put it to productive use. We have basked in self-congratulation as a nation of immi-

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grants. Before the moment passes, let's give it substantive meaning by liberalizing our immigration laws.

Ironically, the Liberty Weekend celebration took place at a time when most polls show that Americans are turning against immigration. (There was irony, too, in Lee Iacocca's role as chief Lady's man: his own vulgar nativism, including crude remarks about the Japanese, both feeds on and fosters anti-foreign sentiment.) The Immigration Service has just finished building a new detention center in a remote corner of Louisiana where people who come here without documents are held until they either apply for asylum (almost impossible for most) or are deported. An incarcerated black South African recently wrote in the *Washington Post*: "Before I came here I was a free man."

Today's nativists, like yesterday's, are afraid that immigrants, especially illegal ones, will steal jobs from native-born Americans. They also fret about the damage supposedly unassimilable newcomers from the Third World will do to the "cultural integrity" of the nation. Neither worry has much evidence going for it. Beryl Sprinkel, who chairs the Council of Economic Advisers, recently reported the council's finding that "overall, and for most people, job opportunities, real wages, and economic welfare are increased" by immigration. This confirms common sense. It figures that people who are willing to give up what they had at home to gamble on making a better life here will tend to be productive, intelligent contributors to society. And according to a report issued late last year by the National Academy of Sciences' National Research Council, "There is no empirical basis at present for the widespread belief that the illegal alien population has increased sharply in the late 1970s and early 1980s." The report said the best estimate of the number of illegals is 1.5 million to 3.5 million—far less than the 12 million figure anti-immigration lobbies bandy about.

We also see no evidence that the same forces of assimilation that gradually shaped our foreign ancestors and their children into Americans are not at work today. In fact, many immigrants already are outperforming native-born counterparts in such all-American activities as science, sports, and business. Any concern that Latin immigrants will cling to Spanish instead of learning English because they are so numerous could probably be dealt with by a simple requirement making English proficiency a condition of citizenship.

Any set of rules to determine who gets admitted to America will end up arbitrarily excluding many worthy would-be Americans. But the current immigration system creates far more than a necessary minimum of inequity. Under current law, there are almost no immigrant visas leftover after members of current residents' families have been taken care of. Our law makes a phony distinction between refugees who flee here for "political" reasons and those whose motives are "economic." The distinction is phony on the practical level, since people's motives are almost always mixed. It's phony on the moral level, since few of us actually treasure our bourgeois liberties more than our bourgeois lifestyles. (Would you rather be a starving peasant in Mexico or a frustrated playwright in Poland?) And it's phony on the administrative level, since those fleeing certain governments (especially communist nations) must meet a far lower standard of proof than those fleeing others (such as El Salvador).

Under the long-pending Simpson-Rodino immigration reform bill, the annual ceiling on legal immigration would stay right where it is now: a stingy 270,000 a year (not including wives, parents, and children of U.S. citizens, who are admitted without limit). Since the purpose of Simpson-Rodino is to crack down on illegal immigration, the net effect of the bill would be fewer immigrants. This would hardly be in keeping with the ostensible spirit of Liberty Weekend. Nor would abandoning the bill and leaving the current ceiling alone. We support the other goals of Simpson-Rodino: normalizing the status of past illegals who have made a life for themselves here, and ending the hypocrisy of letting employers exploit illegals with no legal risk to themselves.

We are tempted to advocate a simple abandonment of immigration ceilings altogether. But short of that, why not amend Simpson-Rodino to expand the legal quota? Let's make it one million—a figure that comes much closer to the real demand for immigrant visas and that seems well within the nation's absorptive capacity. Most of the new slots should go to immigrants who have no relatives to rejoin here but just want a better life—whether they define that better life in terms of political freedom or economic opportunity. Letting in more legal immigrants probably would make America a richer and more interesting society—and would do more to honor our national heritage than all the tall ships in the world.

NOTEBOOK

□ ET TU, MR. SHAWN? Writing in the June 23 *New Yorker* about Israeli general Ariel Sharon's libel suit against *Time* magazine, Renata Adler excoriates *Time* and the media in general for their reluctance to correct factual errors. "A thorough study of letters columns in publications ostensibly concerned with news can be . . . a case history in disproportion and injustice," she writes, in which authors or editors weasel out of admitting errors or even repeat them. Adler asserts indignantly that few publications have the "courage" to publish an actual "corrections" column. In fact, most publications do publish corrections from time to time (though probably not often enough) and virtually all at least open their pages to letters of complaint from readers. The most notable exception is, yes, Mr. Shawn's *New Yorker*, which never publishes letters from readers. The closest it comes to publishing a correction is a very rare feature with the Orwellian label "Department of Amplification." It was in this "Department" that the *New Yorker* "amplified" Jacobo Timerman's vivid description in its pages of "gazing on" the Lebanese cities of Sidon and Tyre, "reduced to ruins" by the Israeli invasion of 1982—

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the same invasion that was the subject of the *Ariel Sharon v. Time Inc.* libel suit. Of course the *New Yorker* didn't admit error. In fact, the "Department of Amplification" insisted that the words "reduced to ruins" had not been intended to leave the impression that the cities had been destroyed. It took ten months from the time of the original lie (the cities weren't anywhere near "reduced to ruins," as was evident to anyone who "gazed on" them at the time) to get even this concession. By comparison, *Time*'s concession of error was gracious and forthcoming.

□ TAX REFORM WATCH: Our friend the economist Michael Barker has an addendum to our plea ("Notebook," July 14 & 21) that House-Senate conferees adopt the Senate tax bill's treatment of capital gains. The Senate, in exchange for a radically lower top rate of 27 percent, would treat capital gains like ordinary income. The House would have a higher top rate of 38 percent but would tax capital gains at a maximum of 20 percent, as now. Barker proposes an interesting trade-off. There is some justice to the argument that part of capital gains represents inflation, not real profit. Therefore, Barker suggests, if a concession must be made, why not index the measurement of capital gains? The main beneficiaries, he notes, would be long-term investors of the sort capital-gains obsessives claim they want to encourage, rather than short-term speculators. To pay for this, why not tax all accumulated capital gains at a person's death? Under present law, a lifetime of "unrealized" capital gains escapes tax completely, because the tax on inherited property is measured from the moment it was inherited. Not only is this a needless favor to the very wealthy (an estimated $5 billion a year in lost revenue at current tax rates), but it distorts investment decisions by encouraging elderly people not to trade their assets.

□ TAKE YOUR PICK:

U.S. Deficit Soared in May

—*New York Times*, June 26

Federal Deficit Narrowed in May

—*Wall Street Journal*, June 26

□ USING THE OLD NOGGIN: "The only way that the Republican Party can hold the White House in 1988 is to nominate a candidate who can win."—Alexander Haig, opening his campaign for president, *New York Times*, June 24.

□ JUNIOR SLEAZEBALL WATCH: Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger has been crowing ever since 1984 about winning a debate at the Oxford Union defending the difficult proposition that there is a "moral difference between the foreign policies of the United States and the Soviet Union." The debate was televised on PBS here in America. The Oxford students also enjoyed the glamor of attracting a major American political figure and appearing on American television. Now the Union has signed a deal with a company called National Media Incorporated to tape, and attempt to sell, three debates a year. The Oxford students knew only that this firm was said to have "good contacts" in Washington. But National Media Incorporated turns out to be a "sister company" of none other than Black, Manafort, Stone & Kelly, the prominent influence-peddling firm that is a "sister company" of Black, Manafort, Stone & Atwater, the Republican political consultants. (See "The State-of-the-Art Washington Sleazeball," December 9, 1985.) Now, presumably, for the usual fee, clients of both these firms will have access to the prestigious podium at the Oxford Union. It'll look great in the ads. The middleman in these negotiations was a young American at Oxford named Frank Luntz. (Remember the name.) Luntz says he has worked with Roger Stone and Paul Manafort since James Buckley's 1980 Senate campaign in Connecticut. That one, says Luntz, was "the best campaign to work for because it assured me of future jobs with all the contacts I made."

Social issues and the right.

SHOVING TIME

FOR MOST people under 40, the return to "traditional values" really means refraining from the wildest excesses of the 1960s: no orgies, pot parties, "open marriages," or other now-folkloric forms of foolishness. It most emphatically does not mean returning to the prevailing middle-class values of, say, the 1950s.

The Supreme Court's recent decision on sodomy laws is only one of several recent events that endanger this narrow definition of "traditional values." Other developments include the growing likelihood that President Reagan's Supreme Court appointees will overturn the *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion, the removal of *Penthouse* and *Playboy* from thousands of 7-Eleven stores, and the prospect of widespread drug testing as a condition of employment. For conservatives especially, push is coming to shove on the social issues.

Take the sodomy decision. It is not known exactly how many men in the Reagan administration and the conservative movement enjoy hugging, kissing, and making love to other men. But certainly there are thousands. There's no scandal in this—unless, of course, you think the law actually should be enforced in Washington, D.C. Along with 26 states, the nation's capital has a law against consensual sodomy. Conservatives in Washington are no doubt pleased that the Court ruled this law constitutional. Some of these same people, however—the ones who hap-

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pen to be homosexual or who have homosexual friends—are secretly even more pleased that the D.C. law will not be enforced.

The permissiveness of the Washington police department releases the gay Reaganites and their friends from an unpleasant dilemma: defy the conservative gospel on behalf of an unpopular cause, gay rights, or support enforcement of anti-homosexual laws and turn in a friend (or yourself) for a stint behind bars.

The choice between lifestyle and politics is most poignant for gay Reaganites. It is hardly restricted to them. A generation of young conservatives faces a similar quandary. Their politics may be antithetical to that of youth in the 1960s, but their lives owe much to the youth culture of yesterday. They avidly pursue extramarital sex, occasionally enjoy pornography, often listen to rock music, usually tolerate and sporadically use recreational drugs, typically regard abortion as a matter of personal choice, and so on. There is no single set of views on these issues. Some categorically oppose abortion and like pornography; others favor censorship of sexually explicit magazines and have no qualms about recreational drug use. But it is not an unfair generalization to say that these young conservatives share the American ethic of social permissiveness that holds many of these cultural innovations to be beyond the coercive reach of government. Their attitudes about pornography or marijuana or abortion resemble popular attitudes about adultery: always wrong, usually imprudent, personally optional. In any case, these things are considered outside the scope of law enforcement.

MANY CONSERVATIVES insist that the importance of the social issues pushed by fundamentalists pales before the imperatives of Reagan's foreign and economic policies. Like liberals in the 1960s, they credit their more radical allies with good intentions. Like the student radicals of the 1960s, the fundamentalists are respected for their spirit, for wanting to restore a public sense of morality, and so on. But the fundamentalists' tactics, rhetoric, and policy recommendations also are usually regarded as extreme. As one articulate conservative put it to me last winter, "Just because I'm for a strong American foreign policy doesn't mean I'm for Jerry Falwell." I agreed that his was a perfectly logical position. I wonder what he thinks of fundamentalist Pat Robertson winning the first Republican caucuses of the 1988 campaign.

The growing probability that "traditional values" will be enforced by governmental coercion raises the cost of remaining silent. A vivacious young woman with an impressive job in the Reagan administration told me recently that Reaganomics was far more important to her than the administration's anti-abortion policy, a policy that she privately opposes. Of course, if she inadvertently got pregnant, couldn't have an abortion, and had to have a baby out of wedlock, her promising career in Republican Party politics would be in deep trouble. I wonder what she thinks of the appointment of Antonin Scalia to the Supreme Court.

Uneasy conservatives admit the inevitability of hypocrisy. They will concede (grudgingly) that many in their own ranks buy pornographic magazines, or prefer same-sex love, or are willing to have or pay for abortions, or use drugs. Still, they say, society needs clear moral principles, and even if citizens imperfectly observe those guidelines they nevertheless benefit from them. The sanction of the law, even if it is only rarely applied, is an integral part of the web of social disapproval that restrains the baser human appetites.

THIS ARGUMENT, of course, depends on evading the question of who should be punished or deprived for violating the official morality. The web of social disapproval has no purpose unless it restrains somebody. Fundamentalists didn't pressure the Southland Corporation into pulling *Penthouse* and *Playboy* from their stores just for the sake of symbolism. They intended to cut *Penthouse*'s sales. They intended to deprive people—the more the better—of the pleasures of looking at photographs of naked women. But somebody, somewhere, say, an unmarried truck driver in Platte, Nebraska, is going to lose out. It's quite easy for conservatives in New York or Washington to sigh that Americans must learn they can't have all their desires gratified, especially when you realize how many of them have *Penthouse* stashed inside their bedside tables or Anais Nin on their bookshelves. Truck drivers in Nebraska may start asking a very good question: is fundamentalist social engineering more important than their right to read what they want?

Non-fundamentalist conservatives often take refuge in federalism. Let the states decide, they say. This is the path the Supreme Court took in the sodomy case and the path that it may well take on abortion. The argument is that because the Founding Fathers said nothing about abortion or homosexuality or pornography, these cannot be matters of constitutional principle. In the federalist view, if Georgia wants to punish homosexual acts, it can. If California wants to permit them, it can too. On complex and controversial issues, it is said, we must rely on the democratic system, not non-elected judges, to decide what the law should and should not sanction.

But the federalist refrain is mostly a political dodge. Federalism is only a procedural answer to the substantive question of whether the government should curb all kinds of behavior that millions of Americans now engage in. To say that states, not the Supreme Court, should decide about abortion says nothing about *what* states should decide. Non-fundamentalist conservatives refuse to say what kinds of abortion laws they would like to see enacted in their own home states.

Anyway, the Supreme Court already has taken the federalist route on pornography. Its 1973 decision says that communities may forbid sexually explicit materials that violate "community standards." This is a sensible resolution to the porn controversy, and it conforms exactly to federalist theory. Nonetheless, fundamentalists—with the timely assistance of the president's pornography commis-

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sion—have demonstrated that "community standards" will not discourage them from imposing their standards on every community in the country. If conservatives really believed in federalism, they would criticize the commission for its projection of federal power across state boundaries. None have so far. The principle, it seems, is cited mostly when it helps avoid a fight with fundamentalists.

The waffling of conservatives is understandable. For the first six years of Reaganism, they enjoyed the best of both worlds. They could count on substantial fundamentalist support for their preferred economic and foreign policies while still enjoying the permissive American lifestyle that the fundamentalists abhor. They could support supply-side tax cuts by day and, if they wanted, watch *Debbie Does Dallas* on the VCR by night. Those happy days are coming to an end.

Conservatives now face a painful choice. They can side with the fundamentalists and risk defying the solid majority of the American public. Maine voters, who supported Reagan 61 to 39 percent in 1984, voted 75 to 25 percent in 1986 to reject a curb on pornography, a curb supported by the same folks who intimidated 7-Eleven. Or conservatives can be honest about their differences with fundamentalists on the social issues and risk permanently fracturing the Reagan coalition. Any Republican presidential contender who differs with fundamentalist orthodoxy on abortion, sodomy laws, or pornography ruins his or her chances for the party's nomination in 1988.

Or conservatives can do neither. This would continue their tradition of being sincerely committed to the principle of hypocrisy, but it is unlikely to forestall the impending crisis on social issues in the Republican Party.

JEFFERSON MORLEY

Arafat's latest sweetheart.

TANGO IN BEIRUT

IN LEBANON eternal blood feuds last only a few years. During a state visit to Tunisia on May 7, President Amin Gemayel quietly met with Yasir Arafat's chief lieutenant, Abu Ayad. The subject: Gemayel's support for the return of the PLO to Lebanon. This is a weird turn of events even in the Middle East. Just four years ago, the Phalange and the PLO were locked in a vicious battle for supremacy in Beirut. On September 14, 1982, a PLO bomb killed Lebanese President-elect Bashir Gemayel. Two days later, fighters from the Gemayel family's Phalange militia stormed into Sabra and Shatila camps and massacred more than 700 Palestinian refugees.

Arafat stated in a June 15 interview with the Egyptian *Russ Al-Yusef* that the meeting between Gemayel and Ayad was "a working meeting . . . in which the problem discussed was the suffering of the Palestinians in Lebanon." Gemayel gave Ayad a file with 5,000 Lebanese passports to help get PLO fighters into Lebanon under legal cover—no easy feat. Even though Gemayel is Lebanon's official head of state, he exerts no authority over the Beirut airport, which is run by Arafat's enemies, the Shiites and the Syrians. According to Ayad, Gemayel also assured him that he would help out with the "passport problem" of other Palestinians, especially those working in the Persian Gulf. And reports from Lebanon indicate that PLO fighters are getting into the country through the port of Junieh, a Phalange stronghold.

The purpose of the Gemayel/Arafat agreement is to smuggle the PLO's commanders and best fighters into the refugee camps in Beirut and south Lebanon, where thousands of Palestinian refugees can be trained as foot soldiers. No one knows how many Palestinian fighters are in Lebanon already. Ayad claims to have 12,000; more objective estimates place the number at somewhere between 1,000 and 3,000. But they keep coming, along with billions of dollars in Palestinian assets that can be used to buy weaponry. What remains of Lebanon's banking community still has a rule that the Lebanese pound goes up when the payroll from Arafat arrives.

If successful, the agreement will take from Israel the remaining fruits of its military victory in 1982-83. The Israelis didn't construct the Lebanon they wanted, but at the time they seemed to have freed the country from PLO influence and the Galilee from terrorist attacks. Gemayel's latest move may ensure that his former Israeli allies will once again be threatened by the Palestinians.

What's in this for Gemayel? Clearly there was more to the agreement than his solicitude for the suffering of the Palestinians. Like Arafat, he has found himself forced to set aside old enmities in order to meet current political needs. After evicting the PLO from Beirut in 1982, Israeli forces withdrew from the Shuf mountains overlooking the Lebanese capital, and Gemayel and his Phalange militiamen suddenly found themselves surrounded by hostile forces: the Syrians in the Bekaa Valley; the Syrian-armed Shiite militia, the Amal, under the command of Nabih Berri; and the Druse militia led by Walid Jumblatt. Three-against-one are bad odds under any circumstance. In Lebanon the Syrians now have the heavy artillery that can pound Christian positions from afar, and the Shiites alone outnumber the Christians. In order to salvage his decaying political position, Gemayel needed an ally.

THIS IS A far cry from what he and his family had in mind in 1982, when Israeli forces entered Lebanon. The Israeli invasion was part of his family's plan to unify Lebanon under the hegemony of the Phalange. But the invasion freed the Shiites from the rule of the PLO, and thus indirectly helped to consolidate their political power. (The Shiites now make up more than 50 percent of the Lebanese population.) After the Israelis had pushed the PLO out of southern Lebanon, Nabih Berri demanded that

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the Shiites receive a share in Lebanon's government. Unlike the members of the radical Hezbollah (Party of God), Berri is not rabidly anti-Christian. He waited a long time to see whether Gemayel would make a deal. Gemayel refused, not only because of his desire to put the state under firm Christian control but also because of the Lebanese Christians' deep-seated fear of the Shiites. When Gemayel rejected Berri's overtures, Berri turned to an alliance with Hafez al-Assad.

Gemayel's actions today are driven by a compelling logic: the enemy of his enemies is his friend. In the PLO he has found a force that could help him tip the Lebanese power scales back toward the Maronites. If Gemayel's Phalange can't dominate all of Lebanon, at least it can dominate the central areas and East Beirut and leave the south to the PLO, which, unlike Berri's Shiites, poses little threat to Gemayel's status as Lebanon's preeminent political leader. In essence, Gemayel and Arafat are attempting to restore the delicate balance of power that existed in Lebanon before the Israeli invasion. During that time the Christians controlled East Beirut and central Lebanon, and the PLO controlled West Beirut and south Lebanon.

THE GEMAYEL/ARAFAT plan is calculated to shatter Syrian and Shiite power in the strategic regions of Lebanon. Assad and Berri have worked out a mutually beneficial modus vivendi over the past year: Berri's Amal militia serves as a docile Syrian ally, keeping the south quiet, and the Syrians provide the materiel to keep the Amal armed and to help prevent the return of the PLO. Arafat's forces are the single biggest threat to both Syrian and Shiite interests in Lebanon. Before the Israeli invasion, the PLO ruled the south, persecuting and killing the predominantly Shiite native population and inviting Israeli retaliation for terrorist attacks. The PLO's return would condemn the Shiites to degradation and poverty. And an arrogant, independent leader such as Arafat threatens Assad's plan to incorporate Lebanon into a "Greater Syria." Palestinian nationalists will hardly take their marching orders from Damascus.

But Assad now has many reasons to avoid the kind of commitment on his western flank that could keep Arafat out. His support of Iran and the Shiites in Lebanon has led to chilly relations with the Gulf states, which fear Shiite fundamentalism. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have cut off cash subsidies that had kept the Syrian economy afloat during hard times. And Lebanon is no longer as profitable as it used to be: for years Syrians looked upon Lebanon as a rich coastal province whose wealth was easily plunderable. Today, to keep Lebanon's economy afloat without Palestinian money, Syria may have to start investing there: hardly the best remedy for Assad's economic woes. And since Assad needs economic stability to help control rising discontent in Syria, he may not be willing to continue emptying the Syrian treasury into Lebanese coffers. The more deeply involved in Lebanon he gets, the deeper trouble he may face at home.

And the Syrians are not convinced that the entire Shiite community is a reliable ally just because Nabih Berri has been one. The Hezbollah may soon gain supremacy over Berri's Amal, and the Hezbollah isn't known to be politically accommodating. Moreover, Berri is vulnerable even among his own men. He faced a possible coup a few months ago, and had to call upon the Syrians for assistance. (They calmed things down by threatening to assassinate his rival.) None of this means that Assad will abandon his ally overnight. Odds are that he will continue providing massive infusions of weaponry to Berri through the Bekaa Valley. But he may not want to commit his own divisions to the struggle in Beirut and the south, and that could give the Gemayel/Arafat alliance the edge it needs to win the crucial battles.

Assad may be learning about the limits of military power in Lebanon in the same way that the Israelis did. If the agreement between Gemayel and Arafat is successful, Assad will discover that his forces are no more capable of imposing a political solution on Lebanon than Ariel Sharon's were, and that even in the wake of his military victory, the PLO has come back to trouble him, as it appears it will continue to trouble the Israelis.

JONATHAN ZASLOFF

From rags to riches.

WALLY-GATE

NEW QUESTIONS about the ethical fabric of our nation's capital are being raised by the story of Walter C. Lenahan, formerly the U.S. government's chief textile expert. Lenahan, known as Wally, is the poor man's Mike Deaver. Once a foreign service officer, he pursued a long career in government that reached its pinnacle in 1982, when he was appointed deputy assistant secretary of commerce for clothing and textiles. This may sound like a menial station, but in fact it is a bureaucratic hot seat. Lenahan managed the operations of a tangled patchwork of import quotas designed to shelter American textile and clothing manufacturers from a presumed tsunami of cheap foreign merchandise. In the international trade wars, Wally Lenahan was a frontline commander for the American rag trade.

By most accounts, Lenahan performed his battlefield duties with valor. According to a former bureaucratic rival at the State Department, Lenahan was "the most protectionist" head of the Commerce Department's textile office in the 25-year history of the American textile quota system. (It was set up as a "temporary" measure to help American manufacturers adjust to trade liberalization measures negotiated by President Kennedy.) The quota system is a labyrinthine affair. Annual U.S. quotas for 109 "categories" of clothing and textiles are established by agreements negotiated separately with more than 30

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textile-exporting countries. As crates of foreign merchandise arrive at American ports, customs inspectors are supposed to count each item, verify its country of origin, and then debit the relevant quota. When the quota is filled, excess merchandise is supposed to be quarantined in a government warehouse until next year's quota allocations are handed out.

ELSEWHERE, such a baroque maze of government controls might have succumbed to the eager ax-men of Reaganite deregulation. But deregulatory principle is no match for the the quota-loving needle traders, who for years (through Sun Belt textile barons) have provided generous financial backing to the Reagan right and (through Frost Belt labor unions) have helped make protectionism a fundamental tenet of Democratic Party economic wisdom.

As the day-to-day boss of the quota system, Wally Lenahan helped make esoteric policy decisions that could have cost foreign or American companies thousands of dollars in disrupted business. He also was responsible for dealing with complaints from the ungrateful beneficiaries of the quota systems, who whine constantly about perceived loopholes through which imports leach in to pollute the American marketplace. During Lenahan's tenure, the Reagan administration, all the while preaching the purest free-trade principles, took several steps to tighten the quota system. Lenahan's office often took the lead in dreaming up schemes to plug the loopholes.

The textile lobby thus was shocked to its seams to learn that last February 7 Lenahan had retired from the Commerce Department to join a Washington consulting firm called International Business and Economic Research Corporation (IBERC). This company is headed by Michael Daniels, a veteran Washington trade lawyer and lobbyist for foreign companies and governments. Recently Daniels merged his small, independent law practice with the Wall Street firm Mudge Rose Guthrie Alexander & Ferdon (in earlier incarnations, the firm's "name partners" included Richard Nixon and John Mitchell). IBERC became an "affiliate" of Mudge Rose. The consulting firm's function is to advise about 75 clients, most of them either foreign textile manufacturers or American textile importers, on how to negotiate the complexities of the American textile quota system. IBERC also is supposed to help Daniels service some of his law clients, specifically foreign governments who pay generously for his expertise in navigating their products around trade barriers and into the American market.

During Wally Lenahan's reign as U.S. textile czar, one of the countries hardest hit by administration efforts to tighten textile quotas was Hong Kong. For assistance in minimizing the damage, Hong Kong's government turned to Mike Daniels. Last September, according to "foreign agent" reports filed by Daniels with the Justice Department, lawyers from Mudge Rose met on two occasions at the Commerce Department with Wally Lenahan to discuss Hong Kong's textile problems. Another government that sought advice from Daniels's firm on textile matters was Israel. Last year, while still at the Commerce Department, Wally Lenahan led an American government team through a difficult series of negotiations with Israel that produced a tentative textile quota agreement. Just about the time Lenahan joined IBERC, the Israelis decided they could not carry out the agreement, and unilaterally renounced it.

The rumor at Commerce is that Wally, who earned around $60,000 to $70,000, may have doubled his salary by joining IBERC. This would barely buy magazines for the waiting rooms at some of the high-class lobbying firms set up by more exalted former Reagan administration officials. But to Lenahan, whose inside knowledge and access to the powerful were comparatively limited, Daniels's offer was spun of gold and silk thread. Lenahan evidently recognized that by joining Daniels, he would open himself up to charges that he was selling out the American textile industry. To protect himself against protectionist revenge, last October he informed the Commerce Department's legal adviser that he was considering job offers from textile-related private employers. He declared that henceforth he would disqualify himself from participating in policy decisions affecting the clothing and textile industries.

Lenahan finally joined IBERC after three months of negotiating with various prospective employers. He announced that he had reached an explicit understanding with his new employers that he would not use confidential information he had obtained while working for the government. Nonetheless, he acknowledged to me that his first assignments at IBERC included advising both the Hong Kong and Israeli governments on strategy for future textile negotiations with the United States. (He said the Israelis decided to renege on their U.S. agreement before he began to counsel them.) And only a few days after leaving the Commerce Department, he traveled to Geneva, to drum up new clients for IBERC. His former colleagues were there, engaged in important textile negotiations.

Lenahan and Daniels deny vigorously that there is anything illegal or even improper in any of this. Government ethics laws, they point out, forbid a former government official from personally representing a private client in proceedings before his former department. But no law prohibits a former official such as Lenahan from advising Daniels or his clients on how to deal with his former department.

THE TEXTILE lobby's initial reaction to Lenahan's defection was to seethe. In late April, one of Lenahan's former bureaucratic rivals, chief U.S. textile negotiator Charles Carlisle, who works for the White House, turned the quiet grumbling about Wally into a whispering campaign. He told the *Washington Post* that some American textile negotiating secrets had been leaked to an unnamed foreign government. The *Post*'s sources supposedly declined to speculate on the identity of the leaker, but they did reveal that the recipient of the leak was Hong Kong. (Others suggested that the recipient of the leak was South Korea, and that U.S. intelligence had proof of this.)

This disclosure infuriated one of the domestic textile

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industry's most stalwart allies on Capitol Hill, Senate Judiciary Committee chairman Strom Thurmond. Although not noted previously for his burning passion to tighten laws against Washington sleaze, the aged South Carolinian introduced a bill to fill what he perceived to be a dangerous legal lacuna. As originally drafted, Thurmond's bill would have prohibited any former American official from working for any foreign "entity"—government or private—for at least two years after leaving the government. Senior officials, such as Cabinet officers, would have been restricted for life. An even more restrictive bill was introduced in the House amid denunciations of Wally Lenahan.

Thurmond's office at first claimed his bill was not aimed at any individual. Its introduction coincided with new revelations about the lucrative foreign agentry of Michael Deaver. But legislative and industry sources said it was the textile treason of Wally Lenahan that prompted Thurmond to act. His anger at Lenahan surfaced publicly in May after Lenahan confirmed (in an interview with me for a textile trade publication) that he was indeed now advising some foreign governments he used to deal with at the Commerce Department. With some fanfare, Thurmond asked Ed Meese and the Justice Department to open a criminal investigation into Lenahan's defection. What was supposed to be a comfortable retirement from government service had become Wally-gate.

Although some of Lenahan's activities—such as advising Israel on how to renegotiate an agreement with the United States that he himself had negotiated—leave an unpleasant odor, it will be hard to put together a criminal case. By disqualifying himself for several months from doing his own job, Lenahan can argue that he went out of his way to avoid conflicts of interest. As for his new role as a counselor to textile-exporting countries, Lenahan and his new employers appear to have studied the loopholes in current government ethics law carefully, and then fully exploited them. And even if it could be proved that someone leaked textile negotiating secrets to Hong Kong, spokesmen for both the Commerce Department and the chief textile negotiator admitted that such information is rarely given a formal security classification. Thus even if information did leak, the leaker may have done nothing illegal.

Given that America sometimes needs to protect secret negotiating strategies to reach equitable trade agreements in an imperfect world, congressional action to close this loophole would seem appropriate. Meanwhile, Senate Democrats, of all people, are complaining that Thurmond's original bill was too tough, and have persuaded him to tailor it a bit. As originally drafted, one of the first victims could have been Wally Lenahan. Under the revised bill, as negotiated by Thurmond, with such unlikely allies as Paul Simon and Howard Metzenbaum, the measure would only apply to officials who left the government after it became law. So Wally could keep his foreign clients. But as presently conceived, it will retain some provisions that will bring a knot to the stomach of functionaries and politicians contemplating a lucrative retirement. One new clause would stop any former officials, including members of Congress, from lobbying any U.S. agency for 18 months after leaving their jobs. Thus, although apparently succeeding in feathering his own nest with silk, Wally Lenahan may have knitted an ethical straitjacket for future generations of former politicians and ex-bureaucrats.

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Take the money and stay.

THE PARASITE CULTURE OF WASHINGTON

BY FRED BARNES

HOW BAD IS Washington? Well, let me describe three folks I know. The first was as dedicated a foot soldier in the conservative movement as you'd ever meet. For ten years he worked on Capitol Hill. He threw himself into partisan fights and occasionally affected legislation. Gradually he began to chafe under the anonymity required of congressional aides. So last year he quit to set up his own consulting firm. Money poured in from unions, business groups, foreign interests, political organizations. Exactly what he does is a little vague. He represents clients and feeds them supposedly inside information, but he doesn't lobby. He gets his name in the papers. His biggest struggle has been deciding how to spend his money. Would it be too ostentatious, too nouveau, to buy an expensive car? Perhaps, but the temptation was too great. He bought a $30,000 Mercedes.

The second fellow was a political mechanic, not overly ideological but skilled in guiding legislation through Congress. Fresh from college, he went to work for a Republican senator. When Republicans captured the White House in

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1980, he joined the administration. He started as a deputy assistant secretary for congressional affairs (he lobbied Congress, in other words) and later moved up to assistant secretary. Then, not long ago, a large corporation asked him to be the firm's liaison in Washington: vice president for government relations. He was involved in an important legislative fight at the time, but the offer was too lucrative to refuse. He took the money. He now goes to a lot of meetings, lunches, receptions, but he doesn't lobby much. His company has law firms retained to do that. His former deputy in the administration (also mid-30s, congressional background) got a similar offer from another corporation. She took the money too, and now rides around town in a limousine.

The third was an official in the Carter White House, a person to reckon with when domestic policy was being crafted. In the bruising intra-administration fights, he invariably staked out the liberal position—forget inflation, we need more social spending. He stuck with Carter to the end, then scouted big Washington law firms for a job. He got one. His salary tripled. What exactly does he do? He certainly doesn't spend his days arguing in court. He lobbies, arranges a few deals, massages major clients, dabbles in politics with an eye on attaching himself to a strong contender for the 1988 Democratic presidential nomination. His name crops up in the papers from time to time, just enough so he's not forgotten.

These three fellows, I'm sorry to say, are real people, not composites. I haven't named them only because it would be unfair to single them out. There are thousands like them in Washington. They do Washington work, which means you can't put your finger on it. One thing's clear: they don't produce anything tangible. I don't know their precise salaries, but if any of the three makes less than $150,000 a year, I'd be shocked. But hold on. They aren't wholly to blame for having forsaken political ideals for big bucks. All they did was respond to the seductive cues that Washington offers these days. The message is: take the money and stay.

WASHINGTON IS is not corrupt in the normal political sense. Graft isn't rampant. Favorable government decisions aren't for sale. Post-Watergate corruption is more subtle. The city simply has a baleful influence on people. The innocents who flock to Washington are seduced but not abandoned. They get good jobs, but their values are changed. Their zeal for making the country a better place is replaced by a powerful yearning for money and superficial success. Or if they retain ideological passion, they are fooled into thinking Washington needs them as think-tank policy analysts, in make-work subcommittee jobs in Congress, as cogs in "public interest" pressure groups. True, this process has been going on in Washington for years. But in the last decade, the pace of such corruption quickened, and now it's out of control. More people come, more stay. The work they do is more and more superfluous, but they are paid better and better. To soak up their discretionary income, an entire luxury industry—restaurants, limos, caterers, hotels, specialty shops—has emerged. What dominates Washington is not evil and immorality, but a parasite culture. Like Rome in decline, Washington is bloated, wasteful, pretentious, myopic, decadent, and sybaritic. It is the paradise of the overpaid hangers-on.

The city is swimming in money, mostly from the private sector. That's why the fund-raising trouble of the American Enterprise Institute, the semiconservative think tank, is news. It's the kind of thing that rarely happens in Washington nowadays. Congressional staffers making $60,000 or $70,000 are a dime a dozen. There are 3,100 trade associations headquartered in Washington, and the average salary of their top executives is $108,000. The bosses of larger associations make around $250,000. Lawyers making more than $200,000 a year are commonplace. Thousands of lobbyists, public relations "experts," consultants, and Washington reps make that or close to it. For those whose taste runs to policy, think tanks and issue organizations are burgeoning. Foundations, especially conservative ones, are pouring money into Washington. "We've created a new gravy train," complains one foundation official. The Center for Strategic and International Studies at Georgetown University has doubled its funding to $8 million in the last six years, which gives it plenty of money to keep a platoon of former officials (James Schlesinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Paul Craig Roberts) on the dole. Still more think tanks may be coming. "All these people will be leaving the administration soon and we can't just let them leave town," argues a conservative eager to start up his own think tank. Never fear. Nobody leaves Washington anymore.

THE NEW Washington, swollen and extravagant and glitzy, is not the creation of President Reagan. But things have certainly gotten worse on his watch. The irony is obvious. Reagan came to Washington to fulfill the conservative dream of bringing the federal government to its knees and making the city a backwater again. He has failed miserably. The federal establishment hasn't grown much since 1980, but everything else is bulging. Reagan, because of his popular leadership and the media attention he attracts, has made the city loom all the larger.

Conservative groups have produced a further irony. There's an inverse relationship between how fervently they oppose dominance of the country by Washington and their own growth in Washington. And oh, my, how they grow. They have an edifice complex. You couldn't find an organization more furiously anti-Washington than the Heritage Foundation. Yet its own presence here has increased perceptibly. Heritage now has a luxurious office building on the fringe of Capitol Hill. A few blocks away, Paul Weyrich's Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress has a string of town houses. In suburban Virginia, the National Conservative Political Action Committee has turned a schoolhouse into its headquarters. Along the Capital Beltway, the National Right to Work Committee has its own large building. Until AEI encountered money trou-

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ble, it was planning to move to a fancy new building of its own.

Liberals, meanwhile, are as much a part of the problem as conservatives. In fact, they came first and touched off the Washington boom. They championed a larger and more active role for the federal government, and that was achieved. But what they wanted was government that served people, particularly the poor. A city brimming with lobbyists and lawyers and consultants, even if they are liberals, doesn't facilitate that. Quite the opposite. Nor does loading up Washington with liberal pressure groups help. As often as not, they fight for a narrow agenda—environmental purity, arms control—of interest primarily to upper-middle-class liberals. Besides, they are offset by better financed conservative groups, and the result is a more complicated system in Washington. It's tougher to do business quickly and crisply. Think what awaits the next liberal president. Embarking on another activist binge will be extraordinarily difficult with so many business and conservative interests rooted in Washington.

SOME ASPECTS of the parasite culture are more egregious than others. One of the worst is the perversion of public service. The case of Michael K. Deaver, the former White House aide, is the perversion of public service writ large. However well Deaver served Reagan, he used his government job as a stepping-stone to wealth. In the old days, experienced congressional aides would occasionally become lobbyists, and administration officials might catch on with Washington law firms. Now there's an established procedure: you get a job in Congress or on a presidential campaign, step up to the administration, and finally go on to easy money. Both career paths got a big boost from the Carter administration, which was poorly connected in national affairs and thus appointed Senate and House officials and campaign staffers to many jobs. When Carter lost in 1980, these folks were turned loose on the private sector in Washington. Many did quite well.

The Reagan crowd has perfected the three-step march to the Washington soft life. And the people taking advantage are younger and younger. They never experience the real world outside Washington. Instead, they come to town out of college to work on Capitol Hill or a campaign. With luck, they'll move to an administration job while in their 20s. By the time they're in their early to mid 30s, they're ready to ride the Washington gravy train as a lobbyist, Washington rep, consultant, P.R. type, or the like. They've reached fat city. And they don't have to break any law or stoop to demonstrably immoral behavior to get there.

Then there is the book contract. It took Dean Acheson, the secretary of state under President Harry Truman, 17 years to get around to publishing his memoir, *Present at the Creation*. No one waits anymore. The rule is: write when you're hot. You get more money that way. But you can't be namby-pamby in what you write because that won't sell books. You have to tell stories out of school and zing people. Former Secretary of State Alexander Haig, paid in six figures for his book, complied. So did former budget director David Stockman, who got $2.4 million for his attack on nearly everyone he had worked with in the Reagan White House. Jeane Kirkpatrick, the former United Nations ambassador, got almost $1 million, but vows she won't try to settle scores in her book, due next year. That must have disappointed her publisher.

What's wrong with the book bonanza? Simply that it undermines government if officials are storing up vignettes and spite to get a fat book deal the day they quit. How can they deal honestly with each other if every conversation and memo is potential material for a quickie book?

THE FINAL perversion is the importance of "visibility." To administration officials and members of Congress, it is almost as important as power. To everyone else in Washington, including journalists, it is the most important thing of all. They lust after it, and pursue it relentlessly. To gain visibility, you have to get on television or be mentioned in the papers or newsmagazines. The more frequently this occurs, the more visibility you've got. And if you have a lot of visibility, you become a star. There's as much a star culture in Washington as there is in Hollywood.

Because television appearances provide the best visibility of all, there is fierce competition to be on the morning news shows, "MacNeil/Lehrer," the Sunday talk shows, any of Cable News Network's programs, and so on. In order to get on TV, reporters claim they're covering a story even if they aren't. That hardy perennial of the upwardly mobile, the "mention" in the print press, is cherished as well. And there are so many places to be mentioned. There's Chuck Conconi's column in the *Washington Post*, the daily "Briefing" on the "Washington Talk" page of the *New York Times*, the personnel page of the *National Journal*, the "Washington Wire" of the *Wall Street Journal*, not to mention regular news stories. As in the Hollywood era of Hedda Hopper and Louella Parsons, a good publicist can help get one mentioned. For a consultant or lobbyist, a mention constitutes proof to their clients that they matter in Washington. It also builds the ego. A friend of mine, a consultant, recently got three mentions in a *Wall Street Journal* story. He was ecstatic. But soon the *Journal* reporter quit for another job. My friend was crestfallen.

From a distance, you might not know that Washington is a boomtown. The skyline isn't studded with new high rises like Dallas or Atlanta. A regulation limiting buildings to 14 stories prevents that. But by every conceivable measure, save one, it is growing rapidly and uncontrollably. The one exception is the executive branch of government. The federal work force, three million strong, hasn't grown since the 1960s. Of course, its growth is what ostensibly has brought everyone else to Washington. There must be other reasons. One was the regulatory explosion of the 1960s and '70s. Soon the city was thick with "public interest" outfits pressing for strict enforcement. To combat them and cope with the new regulations, corporations

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hired more Washington lawyers. In the late 1970s, the era of deregulation began, and demand for lawyers should have leveled off. It didn't. "Growth Continues Despite Deregulation," said a story in the June 30 *Legal Times* of Washington. And that's putting it mildly. Membership in the District of Columbia Bar Association more than doubled between 1975 and 1986, from 20,311 to 44,394.

Lobbyists matched lawyers. Between 1976 and 1985, a period in which federal budgets were supposedly tightened and new programs all but nonexistent, the number of registered lobbyists soared from 3,420 to 8,800. And that's only the registered ones. The best guess is there are 20,000 lobbyists in Washington. Just since Reagan took over, the number of corporate representatives has jumped from 1,000 to 1,300. With all these lobbyists and reps in town, there's no reason for trade associations to move to Washington, right? Wrong. A decade ago, there were 2,100 associations in Washington. Now there are 3,100. R. William Taylor, the president of the American Society of Association Executives, boasts that associations are the third largest industry in Washington (after the government and tourism), with 87,000 employees.

Taylor says associations flock to Washington because it's seen as the place to be. "Perception is as important as facts," he says. "The Washington address gives your members the idea that you're on the Hill fighting for them, even if you aren't. It's a better perception than if you're in Armpit, Ohio." I can't argue with that, or with the notion that associations need to be in Washington to inform their members what's going on in Congress and the administration. But was it really necessary for the American Society of Personnel Administrators to pull up stakes in Berea, Ohio, in 1984 and move to Washington? Yes, it turns out. The migration of associations is feeding on itself. "There's a specialty work force available in Washington," says Kate Bower of ASPA. "You can find people with an association background."

IF ASSOCIATIONS and lawyers and lobbyists wanted an excuse for proliferating in Washington, Congress has given them one. While denouncing Big Government, senators and House members have voted themselves larger personal and committee staffs, and more lavishly paid staffs at that. Since 1976 the personal staffs of House members have practically doubled (from 4,055 to 7,528), and the staffs of senators have more than doubled (1,749 to 4,097). The elephantiasis on committee staffs is worse yet. Since 1965 the staffs in the House have almost quadrupled (571 to 2,009) and in the Senate merely doubled (509 to 1,080). And then there are "officers" of the House (1,818) and Senate (976) and support agencies such as Congressional Research Service, Office of Technology Assessment, Congressional Budget Office, and General Accounting Office.

Are all these people usefully employed? I can't believe they are. After all, there is tremendous overlap among subcommittees. A dozen or so of them in the House deal with energy alone. But a bigger outrage is the pay these people get. I don't mind if the tax code specialists on the House Ways and Means Committee are well paid. But what about the House Committee on the District of Columbia? It doesn't have much work to do these days, since home rule has come to D.C. In the first quarter of 1986, more than half of the committee's 40 staffers were being paid better than $40,000 a year. The salary of the staff director was $72,000. A senior counselor was also bringing down more than $60,000. So was the minority staff director. I could go on and on for the thousands upon thousands of employees on the 120 committees and subcommittees in the Senate and 191 in the House.

Imagine what a trade association or a corporation thinks when confronted by a plethora of subcommittees and thousands of ambitious congressional staffers. We'd better hire some lobbyists and lawyers or open an office in Washington. Otherwise, no telling what will happen to our industry. With all those contact points on Capitol Hill, we can't take any chances. So they don't. And the Washington army of superfluous people grows ever larger.

THE MOST WIDELY held conceit in Washington, shared across the political spectrum, is that the city has suddenly become a center of sophistication. A decade or two ago, it was a notorious mecca of Northern charm and Southern efficiency, a provincial backwater. But no more. The *Washington Post* devoted its Sunday magazine last winter to touting Washington as "The Celebrated City." Columnist Haynes Johnson wrote that it "finally has emerged to fulfill its early promise and become a truly great world capital." Another writer completely lost his grip and called Washington "a second Paris." Even Lyn Nofziger, the rumpled ex-political aide to Reagan who first came to Washington as a reporter in 1958, a conservative with no Washington ax to grind, insists that Washington "has become a much more cosmopolitan city."

Don't believe it. The only legitimate claim to new sophistication is the Metro, Washington's gloriously clean and efficient subway. But no one cites it. They mention the Kennedy Center, an eyesore on the Potomac, where touring plays and a second-rate symphony perform. Or they mention the luxury business that thrives here. Washington is bursting with expensive restaurants and stores such as Gucci and Cartier that formerly stuck to Fifth Avenue and Rodeo Drive. Luxury hotels are sprouting up around town. At 24th and M Streets N.W. there are three showy new hotels, including the Grand Hotel, where Lee Iacocca and Bob Dylan stay. It features 24-hour secretarial service and a minimum room rate of $175 a day.

An important thing to know about Washington, however, is that there aren't many people of enormous wealth living here. Who patronizes the fancy restaurants, limousine services, caterers, and florists? The army of lobbyists, lawyers, and others making $60,000 to $250,000, that's who. A $70 lunch for two consisting of steak, a drink, a vegetable, dessert, and coffee is routine. This summer a $9 million, 900-seat restaurant called Potomac on the River will open in Georgetown. Carl A. Bruggemeier, the managing director, explains the reason for choosing Washington. Disposable income is rising in the city, he says. Every item will be à la

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carte. Only those on expense accounts would tolerate it.

The sale of luxury items, like wine, is booming everywhere as part of the yuppie cultural revolution. But Washington has the yuppie malady in exaggerated form. "If you don't know wine, you're out of business," says Elliott Steren, a Washington liquor dealer. "Washington is a wine town. Five years ago, we had two wine consultants. Now we have four." Ten years ago there were fewer than 30 limousine services in the city. Now the Yellow Pages lists 150. Nearly half of these have started up in the last two years. "It used to be I could count the number of stretch limousines on one hand," says Chris Portugal of Chris's Limousines. "It's not that way anymore." David Stockman, now a New York investment banker, uses one. He arrived recently in a stretch limo at a Washington dinner party. The next morning the limo took him to breakfast.

The best evidence that the luxurious life has taken hold in Washington comes from Jim Calufield, the executive vice president of Ridgewell's caterers. It's routine for business and office meals to be catered, he says. And why not? In Washington, there really is a free lunch.

The truth is, Washington is ripping off America—in more ways than one. Congress does it by wildly padding its payroll at the taxpayers' expense. The "public interest" lobby does it by larding Washington with busybodies paid out of tax-deductible contributions. Corporations and think tanks and trade associations do it by opening Washington offices and hiring every lobbyist and lawyer and P.R. person in sight. Then they run up exorbitant expenses. All these cost plenty. The bill goes to the foundations and corporations who are responsible for funding Washington operations of one sort or another. But the corporate and foundation executives don't foot the bill either. The shareholders pay, and even they get a tax write-off, so part of the bill is passed on to taxpayers. Or Washington expenses get passed on in the cost of products, so consumers pay.

Washington types piously cling to the illusion that they are carrying out the public's business. But in their heart of hearts, they must know that their clients and the public can get along without them. The chief executive officer of any company can get an appointment with top officials of any government department without a lobbyist's aid. If he has trouble, his representatives in Congress can clear the way. He doesn't need to pay anyone to open doors in Washington. He may even hurt his case by hiring a mouthpiece. Officials I know figure the client's position must be weak if a lobbyist is dispatched to defend it. Rockwell paid Michael Deaver to lobby the White House for an extra 100 B-1 bombers. In this instance, it sullied its case. To which I say, serves Rockwell right.

Research for this article was provided by Danielle Plunier.

No more looking the other way.

TERROR AGAINST ARABS IN AMERICA

BY STEVE LERNER

ON OCTOBER 11, 1985, Alex Odeh, the 41-year-old regional director of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee in southern California, was killed by a bomb trip-wired to the front door of the ADC office. The day before the attack, Odeh had appeared on a local TV news broadcast asserting that Arafat and the PLO had not been involved in the hijacking of the *Achille Lauro*. Unfortunately, statements Odeh made denouncing the hijacking, and terrorism in general, were cut from the broadcast.

Alex Odeh was a victim of the new domestic terrorism against Arab-Americans. There appear to be two categories of attackers. The first includes militant Jewish extremists. The second includes "garden variety" racists and xenophobes impulsively lashing out at anyone who looks vaguely Arab. When terrorist activity flares up in Europe or the Middle East, there is often a backlash in this country against innocent Arab-Americans. Many of the people who initiate these attacks seem to believe that they are retaliating against enemies of the United States. And many of them are as anti-Moslem (following the Iran hostage crisis) as they are anti-Arab.

After the attack on Odeh, FBI spokesman Lane Bonner issued a statement saying, "We have attributed the bombing to the Jewish Defense League." The JDL denied responsibility, threatened to sue the FBI, and complained about being tried in the press. (The FBI now refers simply to a "possible link" between the JDL and the bombing.) Nevertheless, Irv Rubin, head of the JDL, has by no means condemned the bombing: "I have no tears for Odeh. He got exactly what he deserved." Despite widespread agreement among criminal investigators that the JDL leads the list of suspects in the most serious attacks on Arab-American

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organizations and spokesmen, there is no hard evidence that would lead to a prosecution. As a result, Odeh's assassins may never be brought to justice.

Mainstream Jewish organizations were shocked by the murder of Odeh and by Rubin's remark. Hyman Bookbinder of the American Jewish Committee says that when he heard of Odeh's murder, he telephoned the leadership of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee "to express my horror." He also prompted his organization to issue a denunciation of the bombing. Nathan Perlmutter, national director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, said: "Cowardly, sneaking murder—regardless of who the victim is—remains an abomination."

It would be comforting to dismiss Odeh's murder as an isolated incident, unlikely to be repeated. But FBI director William Webster, among others, doesn't see it that way. In a speech last December at the Washington Press Club, he warned that "Arab individuals or those supporting Arab points of view have come within the zone of danger, targeted by a group as of yet to be fully identified and brought to justice." Last February he was more specific, noting that in 1985 there was a "resurgence in activity of the Jewish extremist groups directed principally against Arab-American groups and individuals allegedly tied to World War II Nazi activities." The FBI's annual reports from 1981 to 1985 attribute to these groups 22 terrorist incidents. In 1985 they were responsible for four out of seven attacks.

ODEH, A NATURALIZED American citizen of Palestinian origin, was not a member of some wild-eyed extremist group calling for a holy war against the Israelis and Americans. He was a man of peace. In addition to working for ADC, he was a poet and a teacher of Arabic at a local community college. His main energies were devoted to challenging the media stereotypes that routinely depict Arabs as terrorists or greedy oil sheiks.

ADC, started five years ago by former Senator James Abourezk, an Arab-American of Lebanese descent, is an organization patterned after the Jewish Anti-Defamation League. Despite its civil rights focus, ADC has become a primary target of terrorist attacks. Two months before the explosion that killed Odeh, a 12-inch pipe bomb was found propped against the front door of a building in Boston that houses the local ADC offices. It exploded while being removed by the Boston Bomb Squad, wounding two officers, one of them seriously. Two Boston newspapers reported that anonymous callers identifying themselves as members of the JDL had taken responsibility for the attempted bombing.

A little over a month after Odeh's murder, a fire engulfed ADC's Washington headquarters. The D.C. Fire Department, suspecting arson, is still investigating the incident. ADC staff workers in Detroit, New York, and Washington have reported numerous threatening phone calls. After a bomb threat at the Detroit office during the TWA hostage crisis, local police and FBI agents suggested that staffers stay away until tensions eased.

On June 17 the D.C. offices of the United Palestinian Appeal were hit by arson, causing $60,000 to $100,000 damage. Arrested in connection with the fire was a 24-year-old man who had been fired last December from his job as a janitor in the building where the arson took place. It is not clear whether this was a politically motivated attack or a simple case of a disgruntled former employee striking back. Still, the only offices to be damaged (out of eight floors and 40 suites) were those of the UPA.

Arrayh (The Aim), Philadelphia's sole Arabic/English newspaper, has long been a target of harassment and violence. Located just up the street from the Thriller Lounge and the Sunshine Inn, the offices of the newspaper are unmarked except for a modest sign advertising Dabbas Printing. Inside this combination storefront/apartment—standing amidst an eclectic clutter of old printing equipment and a newfangled computer typesetter—is Moustafa Dabbas, 51, editor and printer. A slight, nervous man who immigrated to the United States from Damascus 15 years ago, Dabbas says that the local JDL chapter has periodically attacked his operation from the start. In 1975, a year after he started *Arrayh* with his brother, the printing presses were stolen. To the surprise of Dabbas and others, Bonnie Pechter, then president of the local JDL chapter, boasted to the *Philadelphia Tribune* and the *Philadelphia Daily News* that the JDL had the presses and planned to use them to "print up materials to combat Arab propaganda." The presses have not been returned, and the police do not appear to have made any vigorous attempt to pursue the case.

ACCORDING TO Dabbas, a second attack on *Arrayh* came three months later, when thieves broke through the front window of his new storefront location and took more printing and photographic equipment as well as papers and files. What equipment they couldn't move, they ruined. Since then Dabbas, his wife, his brother, and a small staff put out their paper without major incident until early this year, when a rock was thrown through the front window and he began receiving telephone calls warning him that if he didn't stop publishing, his life would be in danger. On January 17, 1986, returning home at 11 p.m. from a trip to New York, Dabbas was accosted by three men, one of whom, he claims, inquired if he was the editor of *Arrayh*. When he admitted that he was, the men beat him unconscious, leaving him with a fractured skull, a gash under one eye, and bleeding from the ears.

There is some question as to whether the men who assaulted Dabbas were Caucasian or black. The police report indicates that they were black, but Dabbas now claims "it was too dark to tell." If they were black, some argue, it is unlikely that they were members of the JDL. Others maintain that they could have been hired thugs. Philadelphia police are treating the attack on Dabbas as a strong-arm robbery. But Dabbas claims that nothing was stolen from him. "I was attacked because I am the tongue of the Arab community here," he asserts.

Soon after the assault on Dabbas, Ismail al Faruqi, an

continued on page 24

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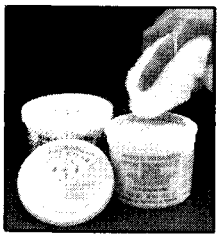

We tried White Wizard cleaner on a rug stain of several months' standing. The rug came clean. We tried it on the grass-stained knees of the kids' blue jeans. They came clean. Now it is the first thing we reach for when confronted with a grease, oil, blood, ink, berry, fruit juice, lipstick, coffee, tea, smoke or pet stain. We have found White Wizard exceedingly mild-mannered — odorless, neutral Ph, non-abrasive, biodegradable, compounded of 9 non-toxic chemicals. Two 10-oz. tubs cost **$14.00** ($2.95) #A14302.

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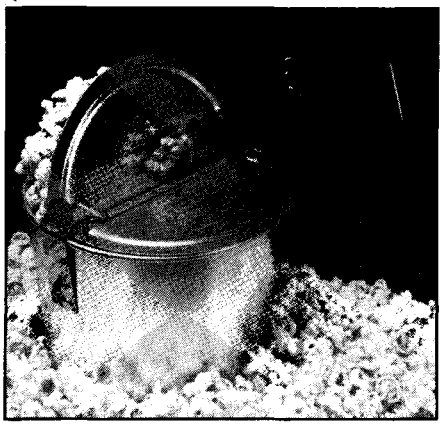
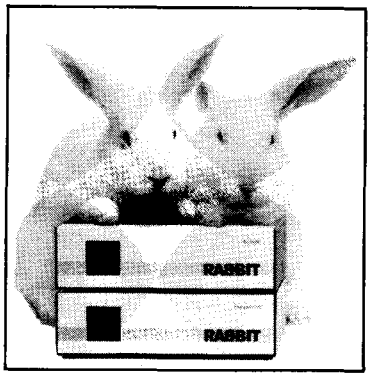
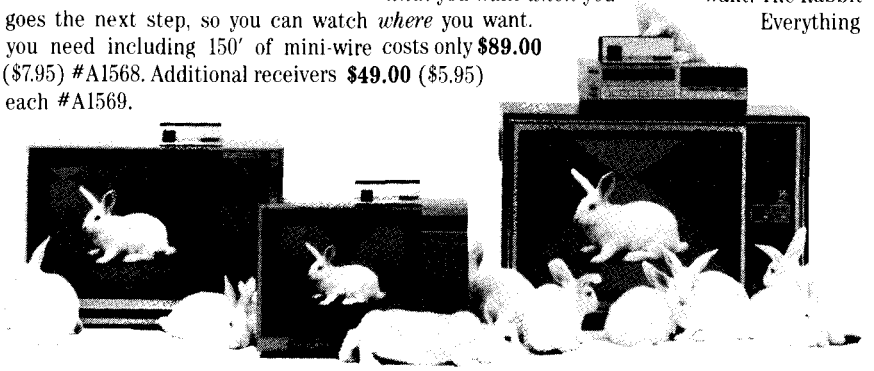
Moisture inside the kernel is what makes popcorn pop. The higher the heat, the stronger the "explosion" of moisture vaporizing and the larger, tenderer, fluffier the resulting popcorn. Most electric and hot-air poppers "puff" the corn more than they "pop" it, leaving it tough with hard centers. This flat-bottomed stove-top popper reaches 475° (electric poppers typically operate at 350°) and pops full in two minutes with 4 quarts of the best popcorn you ever tasted. Stirring paddle with through-the-handle crank virtually eliminates burnt or unpopped kernels. Wooden handle for safe grip, two dump lids. Pop without oil for delicious diet popcorn, 325 calories per giant bowl. Produce tender, fluffy, old fashioned movie theater popcorn, **$25.00** ($3.95) #A1503. For taste-tempting flavored popcorn, a selection of 3 gourmet flavors — raspberry, praline and caramel — enough for 6 more gallons of popcorn, costs **$10.00** ($1.95) #A15043.



MULTIPLY YOUR VCR



The Rabbit enables you to use your present VCR from any television in the house. For a lot less money than the cost of an additional VCR. The Rabbit also lets other TV sets share a single cable hook-up. And if your VCR is the wireless-remote type, you will still be able to use the remote controller — while you are watching on a Rabbit equipped set in another room! Takes only a few minutes to install, comes with clear step-by-step instructions. The two units are linked by thin mini-wire that can be neatly hidden from sight along baseboards and door moldings. The VCR revolution made it possible to see *what* you want *when* you want. The Rabbit goes the next step, so you can watch *where* you want. Everything you need including 150′ of mini-wire costs only **$89.00** ($7.95) #A1568. Additional receivers **$49.00** ($5.95) each #A1569.



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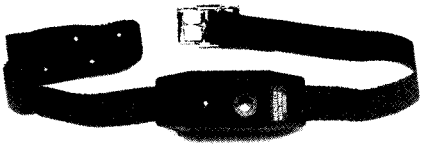
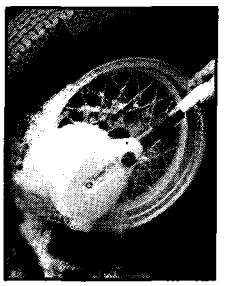
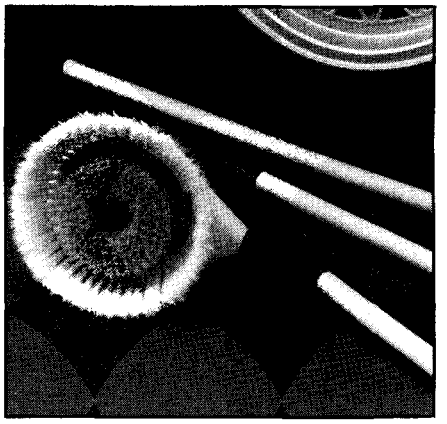


HIGHSPEED SCRUBBER



The Swirlon Rotary Scrubber turns an ordinary garden hose into an automatic cleaning machine. Water pressure spins the 5″ inner brush for highspeed active cleaning while the 8″ stationary outer brush contains the spray and sweeps away the loosened dirt. Brushhead adjusts to any of six angles for best cleaning and contains soap reservoir for automatic sudsing and handy thumb-operated flow control valve. Two 24″ extensions provide a total reach of 70″ — ideal for washing soffits or siding on the house. Makes short work of cleaning garbage cans, lawn furniture, windows, patios and porches. The set costs **$32.00** ($3.95) #CIA1135.



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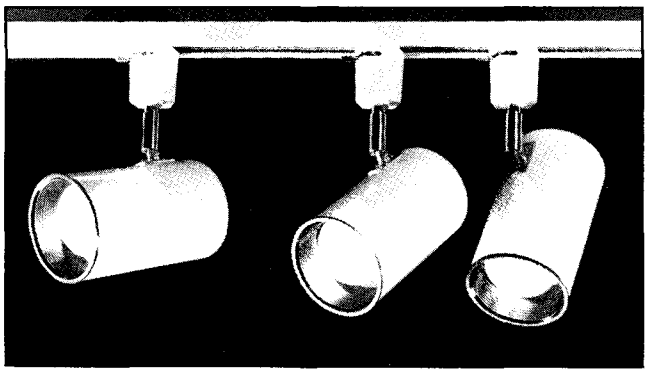
THE RIGHT TRACK



Bringing high-tech into the home never worked better than with track lighting. Its functionality is unquestionable — nothing is more convenient than swiveling adjustable lightheads sliding on their own powered track, allowing you to position and aim light just as you need it. This stylish design is the same as selected by museums, galleries and restaurants for many years. Now it's easier than ever before for do-it-yourself home installation of track lights on wall or ceiling. This complete track light kit comes with a 15′ cord for plug-in installation and canopy if you prefer to wire directly into existing junction box. The four foot track, and track fixtures are UL-listed and come with everything needed for installation. (Bulbs not included.) Choice of styles: Two-head light system rated for 100W bulbs, #A1555, **$49.00** ($5.95); or three-head light system for 75W bulbs, #A1556, **$59.00** ($6.95).

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Backless "Back" Chairs have solved the age-old problem of proper seating, aligning the body on its natural axis so that sitting does not stress spine or back muscles. The redistribution of body weight is dramatically more freeing, natural, comfortable. But until now you had to give up mobility to sit this intelligently — these chairs were unidirectional and if you needed to change orientation you had the awkwardness of moving the whole chair. Finally it swivels! In its brand-new swivel incarnation, the Back Chair is suited for use at any work station, desk or table. The reinforced oak 4-star base has commercial-quality dual-track casters for easy manueverability over carpets or floors. Effortless swivel action. Manual height adjustment. Gray poly-cotton fabric over plush cushion. This is a new twist on a good idea and until you use it you don't know how relaxed and productive you can be sitting down. The price is a nice turn too, only **$69.00** ($11.95) #EVA1337. Minimal assembly.

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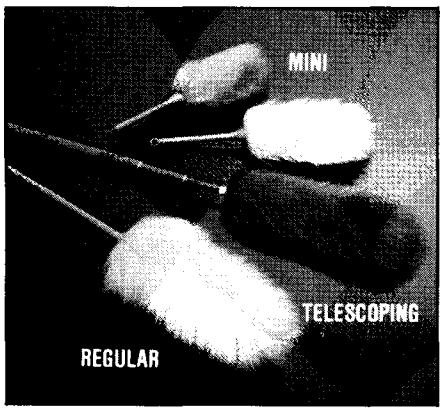

Lambswool contains a natural static charge that makes dust literally leap off surfaces. This magnetic attraction is just the thing for dusting bric-a-brac, china, crystal and pictures. Our dusters are imported from New Zealand where climate conditions grow the fluffiest, highest quality lambswool in the world! Our all-time favorite, the standard 27″ long duster costs only **$8.00** ($1.95) #A1351. We also offer a set of four lambswool dusters: our popular 27″ duster, our telescoping duster which extends to more than four feet — lets you reach high corners, top shelves, overhead lights and collapses to 28″, and two mini-dusters for extra fragile objects **$16.00** ($2.95) #A1352.

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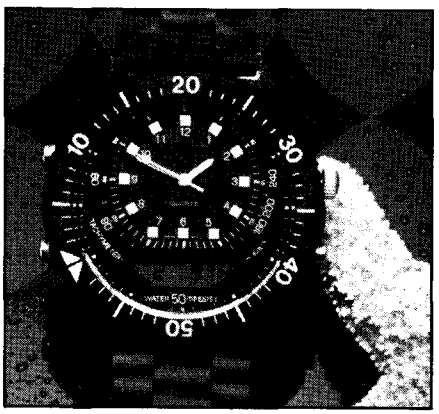
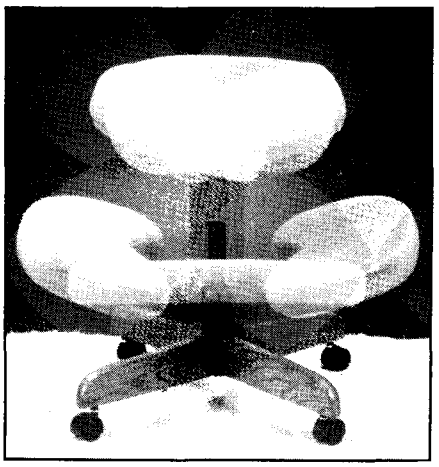
The first thing to amaze you about this custom chronograph is its array of useful features. But the real surprise is the whistlestop price: under $50. The Diver's Watch is rated waterproof to 5 atmospheres (over 150′). The movable bezel, case and band are all "black chrome" plated in a rugged matte finish. Two sunken faces provide fully independent digital and analog timekeeping, so you can set one face to home time and one to travel time. Date, day and month display; alarm; 1/100 second chronograph with lap timer; choice of hourly chime, 12 or 24-hour format. Precision Japanese movement. 1-yr. warranty. **$39.00** ($4.95) #A1490.





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elderly Temple University religious scholar, and his wife were brutally murdered. Rumors that the murder was politically motivated were given some official credibility when the local coroner described the slaying as a premeditated attack in which the assailant probably "came with intent to kill." Local police are leaning toward the explanation that the killings were the by-product of a botched burglary, but they are looking into the possibility that the murder was the result of a "religious or personal vendetta."

Last July in Tucson, Arizona, a 19-year-old, non-Arab woman was raped and beaten outside a restaurant frequented by Arab-American students. According to the *Arizona Daily Star*, the woman told police she might have been attacked because she was dating a Palestinian student. In addition to being raped by two men, police report that the woman had a Star of David cut lightly into the skin on her chest with a knife.

LAST JUNE, around the time of the TWA hijacking in which an American Navy man was executed, there was a rash of attacks on Arab-American centers and mosques across the United States. Hardest hit was a Houston mosque, which suffered $50,000 worth of damage from two pipe bombs thrown through the window from a passing truck. Also in June the Islamic Institutes in San Francisco and in Dearborn, Michigan, were vandalized. Mosques in other parts of the country were threatened.

Shortly after major incidents in the Middle East, Arab-American students have been beaten in bars and on the streets—apparently because they looked Arab. After the announcement of the U.S. bombing in Libya, for example, ADC reports that five Arab students from Syracuse University were beaten up in a pub. One of the students may lose sight in one eye. A Saudi Arabian student in New Haven was assaulted outside a bar. And an Egyptian medical student required medical treatment after he was beaten in the streets of Royal Oak, Michigan. In each case, the assailants are reported to have made derogatory remarks about Arabs.

Dr. Mohammed T. Mehdi, secretary general of the National Council on Islamic Affairs, warns that Arab-Americans, especially those recently arrived from the Middle East, are overreacting to the current wave of harassment and violence. "It would be a mistake to make things sound worse than they are," he insists. In the last 20 or 30 years there has been only one death that can be attributed to anti-Arab-American attacks—that of Odeh. Mehdi, the elder spokesman of the Arab-American community in New York, has been the victim himself of attacks on several occasions. In 1968 his back was broken by Jewish militants who interrupted a press conference he was holding on Second Avenue and 42nd Street. Despite this experience, Mehdi, quoting from an old proverb, talks about the dangers of paranoia: "A man who has been bitten by a snake sees everywhere a snake. Every piece of rope to him is a snake." Mehdi says he still gets threatening phone calls. "But those of us who have been threatened 10,000 times don't think it's such a big deal when we get a call from someone saying we're an SOB and they're going to kill us. We don't even call the police anymore."

Bookbinder agrees that it would be a mistake to interpret isolated incidents as a "great big movement of anti-Arab violence, because there is no such thing." He claims that there is more vandalism and desecration directed at the Jewish community than there is against the Arabs—"not that there is any big pogrom going on, but this stuff happens."

Comparing attacks on Arab-Americans to those on Jews would be difficult, because there are no reliable statistics. Given the reluctance of recent immigrants to call attention to themselves by complaining to authorities, even a "log" kept by ADC probably documents only a fraction of the incidents that actually occur. Further complicating the picture is the fact that some relatively small part of the violence and abuse suffered by Arab-Americans is the result of intra-Arab hostility—particularly in the Lebanese community, where the factional fighting of Beirut has reportedly spilled over into the United States.

In its annual reports on domestic terrorism from 1977 through 1984, the FBI shows that of 395 terrorist incidents committed in the United States, Arabs were proven responsible for only five. Three of the five attacks, according to Democratic Representative Mervyn Dymally of California, were by Libyan nationals against Libyan nationals, the fourth involved a sit-in by Saudi students at the Saudi Arabian Embassy, and the fifth was a letter bomb sent to the Saudi Embassy.

THE LARGEST Arab community in North America has grown up in suburban Detroit around the auto industry. Anti-Arab prejudice has grown up with it. In Westland, a working-class suburb ten miles from downtown Detroit, a Palestinian immigrant, the wife of an auto mechanic, says that numerous attacks on her home and family have forced her to move. Over a year ago, someone broke into her house while she was out and set one of the bedrooms on fire. More recently, a smoke bomb and a rock were hurled through the living-room window. Her front window has been shot full of BB holes on numerous occasions, her mailbox was stolen, and the family car was smeared with eggs and painted with slogans revolving around the "Arab Go Home" theme. Her six-year-old son has asked her to change his name to something that "sounds more American" and requested that she not speak to him in Arabic outside the home or send him to school with pita bread. Classmates call him "camel jockey" and "Qaddafi's brother."

In Dearborn, the Detroit suburb with the largest Arab-American population, bigotry against people of Arab origin arose in the political arena last year when Michael Guido won the mayoral election by campaigning on a platform of dealing with the "Arab problem." Guido played on local fears by hinting that Arab-Americans were

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depressing real estate values. Many of these families are poor, and sometimes several share a single house. They can't afford air conditioning, so they sit out on the front porch to catch the breeze. Some of them roll grape leaves, sort dandelion greens, or cook shish kebab over a hibachi in the evening. These activities are frowned upon by the non-Arab members of the community, who think the only proper place to cook outside is over a barbecue in the backyard. Graffiti around town attests to the hostility: "Nuke the towelheads," one sign suggests; "Sand Niggers Go Home," reads another.

Racism in Dearborn is nothing new. Originally designed as an experimental community by Henry Ford—himself a known anti-Semite and racist—Dearborn has long been famous for its hostility to blacks. What's new, says Allen Amen, a third-generation American of Syrian ancestry who works at a local community college, is that racists are "shifting their guns from the blacks to the Arab-Americans, because now we're seen as a greater threat." Amen ran for city council in 1977, but got death threats during the campaign. It got so bad, he says, that he sent his wife and children out of town to visit relatives. He subsequently moved his family to another neighborhood.

Just as Japanese-Americans have had to face the accusation of dual loyalty during World War II, today the patriotism of many Arab-Americans is being challenged by people who argue that their loyalties remain in the Arab world. "Lots of Arab-Americans are asked to justify themselves whenever anything happens in the Middle East," fumes Terry Ahwal, a young Palestinian immigrant who now works full-time as a staff person at ADC in Detroit. When one caller cast aspersions on her loyalty, Ahwal answered: "My sister is in the Marines, I'm in the auxiliary police, and our whole family is involved in volunteer work in our community. What right have you to ask us to justify ourselves?" Ahwal asserts, "It has gotten so bad that many people are afraid to tell us what happens to them because they don't want to call attention to themselves."

It didn't help when NBC aired a made-for-TV movie last February entitled *Under Siege*, about a group of Shiite Moslems in Dearborn who launch a heavily armed, terrorist attack on the United States. Or when, subsequently, the *New York Post* found some hapless young man in Dearborn willing to pose for a picture in which he held his baby in one arm and a rifle made to look like an automatic weapon in the other. Like the movie, the *Post* story, which claimed Shiite gunmen were training with automatic weapons in Dearborn, was sheer invention.

WITH PROMPTING from two Arab-American organizations, the federal government is beginning to take an interest in anti-Arab violence in this country. This month the House Subcommittee on Criminal Justice is holding hearings on "Anti-Arab Violence in the U.S." At the same time, the U.S. Civil Rights Commission is considering whether to launch a full-scale investigation into allegations that the civil rights of Arab-Americans are being systematically abridged.

In petitioning the Civil Rights Commission, James Zogby, director of the Arab American Institute, wrote that the many threats and acts of violence against Arab-American organizations are "but part of a larger picture of discrimination, harassment, and intimidation." He told me that he is particularly concerned about the "McCarthyite tactics" used by some Jewish organizations to label Arab-Americans who speak out about the Palestinian issue as "terrorists" or "terrorist supporters." He stressed: "People don't hate me because of where my Daddy came from, but because of what I believe in. . . . If one says that the PLO is representative of the Palestinian people—and I would like to argue that case . . . one is immediately labeled a defender of terrorism for it."

In this free country, Zogby is entitled to support the PLO without fear of violent retribution. But he can't have it both ways. If he doesn't want to be considered a supporter of Palestinian terrorism, he should condemn Palestinian terrorism. Bookbinder makes a careful distinction between Arab-Americans who believe that a homeland for the Palestinian people is a worthwhile goal and "those who use this legitimate objective as an excuse for terrorism against innocent victims by the PLO or others. . . . Those Arab-American spokesmen who are giving the PLO a clean bill of health . . . they are terrorist supporters."

SOME POLITICIANS have become wary about support from Arab-Americans—regardless of their political tendencies. The campaigns of Wilson Goode, Walter Mondale, and Joe Kennedy initially refused to accept political contributions from Arab-Americans. (The Mondale campaign later apologized. Kennedy apologized and offered to receive the check if it were returned. Goode refuses to discuss the matter.) Presumably the political advisers of these candidates were afraid of political reprisals from Jewish organizations and voters if their candidate accepted "Arab" money. In the 1984 presidential primary campaign, Mondale's people even tried to make an issue of the fact that some of Gary Hart's funds were in a major Washington, D.C., bank that happened to be owned by Arabs! More recently, the Democratic National Committee has avoided involvement with a nascent Arab-American organization that is seeking to give Arab-Americans an active role in the Democratic Party.

The recent flux into the United States of Arabs from the Middle East, particularly from anarchic Lebanon and the Israeli-occupied West Bank, has made Arab-Americans the "new kids on the block." As such they are subject to the racist rites of passage that have greeted other immigrants who came to this country in large numbers—including blacks, Jews, Irish Catholics, and Japanese. But racism against Arab-Americans in the current political climate is often granted a shadowy legitimacy—even a guise of patriotism. Many people fail to distinguish between Arabs involved in hostile acts against citizens of the United States and Americans of Arab ancestry who are demanding that their right to freedom of speech be protected. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

New York-Washington Shuttling

Nora Ephron's novel *Heartburn* reads as if written by an educated Joan Rivers. But for her screenplay Ephron has altered matters. First, practically all the Jewishness is gone, and that was quite a lot of the book. Second, Rachel Samstag is no longer a self-mocking, self-glorifying, obsessively frank stand-up comic. And her husband, Mark Forman (Feldman in the book), is now a seasoned Washington columnist, not a zooming yuppie.

Heartburn
(Paramount)

Presumably these changes were encouraged by the director, Mike Nichols, who is surely responsible for the basic change in shape. The novel begins with Rachel, married, living in Washington, with a small child and pregnant again, discovering that Mark is having an affair. Everything about their past is handled with flashbacks, memories, references in conversation. The film is chronological: it begins with Rachel and Mark meeting at a wedding in New York. In one way the rearrangement is a benefit. The novel is slightly oppressive in its feverish ambition not to bore: it starts at a high point in order to grab us, then hurries along with lots of one-liners, inserted jokes, party chaff, even recipes. (Rachel is a food writer. This is possibly the only novel with an index of recipes.) The screenplay is more relaxed. By the time Ephron wrote it, she knew the thing was a success—it had even been bought for pictures!—and with the advice of Nichols, for whom she had worked on *Silkwood*, she could go in more for heart, for a troubled woman whose bravery is in her wit rather than a witty woman in trouble.

None of this is to worry about the desecration of a work of literature. But it's a smooth example of how to take a book intended for with-it people and convert it into a film for those outside the charmed circle whose chief itch is to be in it. The screenplay remains big-town without shutting out others. The heroine retains her name, which is possibly Jewish, as are other names in the story; every character is at least comfortably loaded; social attitudes are liberal without being bothersome. (Lots of background blacks at weddings and parties.) It all becomes high-class soap with the one element that soaps can't have, the eff word. (The day that TV permits the eff word, Hollywood had better beware.)

Masterminding all this is Nichols, no dum-dum. He is one of the best of directors, on stage or screen, as long as he sticks to lightweight stuff. With the master cinematographer Nestor Almendros, Nichols has given the film a freshness of composition, a scene-by-scene substance, that implies comedy-drama of more import than we get. In the opening shot, we look upward at a stained-glass window and Rachel, seen from below, walks into the shot, followed by Mark. They don't know each other, but they acknowledge each other and move on. We are whetted. At their own subsequent wedding, they exchange vows while a guest in the background, just barely in focus, chews gum. In an argument in their Georgetown home, Rachel is in the foreground, Mark at the end of the long hallway. Thus their house becomes part of the argument.

Sam O'Steen has been the editor on almost every one of Nichols's films, and *Heartburn* shows why. O'Steen understands Nichols's impatience, his thrust, and also his contradictory need, once in a while, to linger. Party scenes are often boring. O'Steen helps Nichols—and us—through the parties here before our jaws can clench.

All very intelligent filmmaking, all wasted on flimsy material. The script has two main flaws. First, the main characters are undefined. Rachel is simply the one among her friends that the camera spends most time with. The film, we feel, could suddenly decide to follow one of the women she knows and not much of the dialogue would have to be rewritten. Virtually the same can be said about Mark, except that he is older. (See below.) The most taking episodes in the film have nothing to do with the story: they occur when the two are together doing nothing. Frank Capra said that a good film ought to have some scenes that don't advance the story, that simply allow us to loll around with a couple of people whom we like. Possibly the best scene in *Heartburn* is the one in which Rachel and Mark eat pizza in their incompletely renovated house. That's all. (The renovation is never completed.) But the lack of character definition is underscored at the end. Rachel flies back to New York with her children. Why? To live with her father? Now ready to become what (outside her job)? The novel is hardly a humdinger, but at least there is a complexity, an ambiguity, at the end that is more inviting than this empty up-up-and-away ending. And in the last shot of Mark, he walks out of a dinner party with pie (literally) all over his face. Feeling what? Going where? Having determined what out of his experience?

FILMS WORTH SEEING

A Room with a View. E. M. Forster replicated on the screen with a good eye, a good sense of Edwardian England, and (except for the Lucy) an excellent cast. (Reviewed 3/24/86)

Signal 7. A dozen San Francisco actors under Rob Nilsson's direction begin to improvise about taxi drivers and enlarge it all into telling naturalism. Affecting. (6/30/86)

Tea in the Harem. A new writer-director, Mehdi Charef, does well with this account of North African adolescents in Paris. Their troubles are familiar; the rendering is exceptional. (6/16/86)

Vagabond. Agnès Varda's best work, written and directed with rigor and respect. Sandrine Bonnaire, 18 when she played the lead, wanders the roads of southern France until her accidental death seals her mystery. Profoundly disturbing. (6/2/86)

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The other flaw, connected to the first, is the theme. We never learn what this film is really about. Rachel is happy; then, after she learns of Mark's infidelity, she is unhappy and goes back to her father in New York with her born and her unborn child, prepared to resume her career. Mark persuades her to come home by swearing to give up the affair. She returns; he breaks his word. After the second birth, she goes back to New York again. The end. This is just a series of events, not a drama, not even a narrative made cogent by insight, let alone novelty. On her wedding day she delays coming out of her bedroom (another cliché) because she distrusts marriage. All she finds out in the film is that she was right—but right only for herself, not necessarily for any others of us. The film's various smartnesses unravel into a case, and though she's a bright woman, it's a dull case.

Jack Nicholson is miscast as Mark. First, he is too old. All the others are c. 35. Nicholson is almost 50 and looks it. Such marriages occur, of course, but they are quite different from what this one pretends to be, of coevals with coeval friends. That and the fact that he is gentile would have aroused some comment from her friends, from herself. (Some of the book's better lines had to be changed for Nicholson. In the film he refers to his former wife as "the first Kimberly." Flat. In the book she is "the first Jewish Kimberly.") Nicholson seems to be having a harder time these days with non-intense moments. He can handle the anger and passion; for the rest, which is most of the time, he seems merely to be making faces.

Meryl Streep, as Rachel, scores one substantive advance in this picture. Virtually everyone recognizes her tremendous talent, but some think that she is residually a bit cool. I disagree. (Think, for just one instance, of *Sophie's Choice*.) And here her performance has affecting joy, warmth, heartsickness. But she suffers particularly from the lack of pungent characterization in the script. Her hair has been cut short and dyed dark to make her nose stand out. She even has a line about not wanting a nose job. But those are just weak nods to the young Jewish metropolitan she is intended to be.

Heartburn is never boring, sometimes ingratiating, occasionally funny. (In the depths of depression, Rachel watches "Masterpiece Theater"—not so identified—and fantasizes that the host is introducing the next episode with a synopsis of her own life. The host is the virtuoso English actor John Wood, doing a scalpel job on Alistair Cooke.) There's always pleasure in the way Nichols times dialogue and moves actors. But when it's all over, we're left with one question: "Was that *it*?"

Correction. Reviewing *Karl May* last week, I called Old Shatterhand an American Indian. In fact he is a sort of blood brother to Indians, something like Cooper's Natty Bumppo.

The poised art of Primo Levi.

THE HUMANIST AND THE HOLOCAUST

BY DAVID DENBY

READING THE first few pages of *Survival in Auschwitz*, Primo Levi's recently reissued 1947 memoir, one is at first impressed, then grateful, then astonished. How is it possible that this book, and its equally remarkable sequel, *The Reawakening* (1961), are not famous in America? If one comes to Levi's early books after reading his later works—*The Periodic Table*, *If Not Now, When?* and *Moments of Reprieve*—one isn't quite prepared for the dramatic nature of his achievement. *The Periodic Table*, a combined memoir and chemico-metaphysical lark, is a kind of eccentric triumph, but Levi's two Holocaust volumes are the fulfillment of a literary ideal long imagined yet widely thought impossible.

Judging the quality of Holocaust literature is, to put it mildly, a delicate business. To misunderstand, or be misunderstood, would be too awful; a literary judgment might be taken as a dismissal of the experience behind the writing (for as experience, certainly, the past of the Holocaust writers is all on the same level, and beyond judgment). Even to praise one writer or another seems odd, discomforting, an assertion of mere opinion when so much more than a literary response is called for.

As everyone knows, the resources of literature are considerably straitened by such a subject. Anyone giving way to moral indignation sounds horribly inadequate in the face of such crimes. And art can offer little refuge. Too many ideas, too much literary brilliance, too much metaphor, symbol, irony—in a word, too much art—may strike us as a vulgarity and an imposition. In weak or grandiose moods, we may be tempted to think that silence is the best of all responses to the unendurable. "The world of Auschwitz lies outside speech as it lies outside reason," wrote George Steiner in 1963. "To speak of the *unspeakable* is to risk the survivance of language as a creator and bearer of humane, rational truth. Words that are saturated with lies or atrocity do not easily resume life." In Steiner's influential view, the collapse of German civilization in the Nazi period called into question the value of literature itself.

But Levi, a survivor of Auschwitz, did not suffer the losses to sensibility that many writers about Auschwitz considered almost inevitable. A chemist by trade, shocked into writing by his ordeal, Levi produced books that are precisely a triumph of sensibility. He writes with an even plainness of manner, a refined simplicity and lucidity that encompasses, in the same breath, pain and degradation and the most noble ideals. He is direct and specific, yet never lurid. His suffering and the suffering of others made him

Survival in Auschwitz and *The Reawakening* translated by Stuart Woolf with an afterword by Ruth Feldman (Summit Books, 397 pp., $19.95)

The Periodic Table translated by Raymond Rosenthal (Schocken, 160 pp., $16.95)

If Not Now, When? translated by William Weaver (Summit Books, 349 pp., $15.95)

Moments of Reprieve translated by Ruth Feldman (Summit Books, 172 pp., $14.95)

David Denby is the movie critic for *New York* magazine.

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an impassioned man, but the emotion finds release in a prose mournful yet tough, grave yet unceremonious, personal yet never self-aggrandizing. The quiet style achieves subtlety, even wit. One might have thought that heavenly angels of gentleness presided at his birth—and then one remembers the experience they condemned him to write about.

In comparison to the high-flown severity of most writing about the Holocaust, Levi's modest effort at description and understanding might seem naive. And perhaps that is why *Survival in Auschwitz* did not cause much of a stir when it first appeared. Here was a survivor, clearly an intellectual, who was innocent of theories about totalitarianism and Nazism, innocent of prophecy and despair. In this book, and in his later work, he was, of all things, a kind of 19th-century humanist—the most ridiculed, the most despised, the most inadequate of all postwar intellectual types. Like some heroically oblivious silent-film actor who maintains his calm amid the whirlings of nature, this old-fashioned and orderly person, this *gentleman*, was absurdly at large not only in the 20th century, but in the worst catastrophe the century had to offer.

A humanist after Auschwitz! There is something almost comical, but immensely satisfying, in the paradox of Levi's identity. He not only violates our sense of what a survivor should be, he violates our sense of what a modern writer should be. He lacks fierceness, anguish, a taste for extremity. He has little drive toward self-examination and none toward self-laceration, no interest in exhuming his soul in all its perversities. He is not a great imaginative genius like Joyce, Kafka, or Céline. And yet he is the great memoirist of the Holocaust—certainly the most extreme of all memories—and one of the outstandingly beautiful and moving writers of our time. As Lionel Trilling said of Orwell, his not being a genius is part of the reason we value him.

Primo Levi was born in Turin in 1919, the child of middle-class Jews with substantial roots in the tolerant soil of northern Italy. Thoroughly assimilated, Levi's family, like most Italian Jews, did not speak Yiddish but an eccentric and seemingly contradictory mixture of the Piedmontese dialect ("rugged, sober, and laconic ... never written except on a bet") and bits of Hebrew ("snatched from the language of the fathers, sacred and solemn, geologic"). At the beginning of *The Periodic Table*, published in Italy in 1975, a charming, almost unclassifiable book—part memoir, part scientific treatise, part rumination on such topics as companionship, solitude, and the profession of chemistry as an entry point to the great mysteries of existence—Levi makes an elaborate comparison of his ancestors to argon, a gas that will not interact with any other element:

> Not all of them were materially inert, for that was not granted them.... But there was no doubt they were inert in their inner spirits, inclined to disinterested speculation, witty discourses, elegant, sophisticated, and gratuitous discussion. It can hardly be by chance that all the deeds attributed to them, though quite various, have in common a touch of the static, an attitude of dignified abstention, of voluntary (or accepted) relegation to the margins of the great river of life.

In describing his family in this ruefully celebratory way, Levi sets the background for his own ironic self-portrait. The character who appears in all three autobiographical volumes is essentially an observer—detached, self-protecting, a young man of moderate temperament without a taste for struggle. Trained in Turin as a chemist, he seems to have found a student's cloistered life, with its regulated competition and achievements, quite congenial. One gets the impression of a quiet, shy, rather defensively haughty young scientist-craftsman, proud of his abilities yet modest in his demands on life.

AFTER school (in the late 1930s) he takes a variety of jobs as a chemist, his career restricted but far from destroyed by the 1938 racial laws. Toward fascism he and his friends cultivate an attitude of contempt, a mood of rejection more aesthetic than political, and entirely inactive. He is drifting, waiting for life to begin:

> We proclaimed ourselves the enemies of Fascism, but actually Fascism had had its effect on us, as on almost all Italians, alienating us and making us superficial, passive and cynical.... Each of us did his or her work by day, slackly, without believing in it, as happens to someone who knows he is not working for his own future.

Only after the collapse in July 1943 of Mussolini's government, and the beginning of the Nazi occupation of northern Italy, does Levi join the partisans. He is not a communist, a socialist, or a Catholic. He makes the decision without moral or ideological support—as an extension of sensibility, almost—and it is not a

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success: "We were cold and hungry, the most disarmed partisans in the Piedmont, and probably also the most unprepared." He is immediately betrayed and arrested, and during interrogation, "partly out of fatigue, but partly out of a sudden surge . . . of haughty pride," he admits to being a Jew. The fascists turn him over to the Germans, who deport him to Auschwitz. Years later, in an autobiographical piece written in 1982, Levi dryly summarized the rest:

> The railroad convey that took us to the Lager contained 650 persons; of these, 525 were immediately put to death; 29 women were interned at Birkenau; 96 men, myself among them, were sent to Monowitz-Auschwitz, a *Nebenlager* belonging to I. G. Farbenindustrie. Of these, only about 20 of the men and women returned to their homes. I survived imprisonment by a fortunate chain of circumstances: by never falling ill; by the help of an Italian brick-layer; by being able to work two months as a chemist in an I. G. Farbenindustrie laboratory. I was liberated thanks to the rapid advance of the Red Army in January, 1945. . . . During my imprisonment, despite the hunger, the cold, the blows, the fatigue, the gradual death of my companions, the promiscuity of all hours, I experienced an intense need to recount how much I was living . . .

The book produced in answer to that need, in 1947, was called, in its British version, *If This Is a Man* (a literal translation), and in its current American edition, *Survival in Auschwitz*.

LEVI, it should be said, was relatively fortunate. His immediate family was not deported; he did not endure before his own eyes, as millions of others did, the death of parents, children, brothers, sisters. He was randomly beaten, as almost all prisoners were, but never tortured. He was not one of the Jews forced to participate in the extermination process itself. He was even able to work, for a while, at his own trade. Surely his pardon from the very worst made it easier for him to write as he did, to compose a record of cruelty and misery almost detached in its clarity. Perhaps literature is possible only in the absence of the final degree of suffering.

In the early pages of *Survival in Auschwitz*, the prisoners, in this case Italian Jews, ride across Europe in freight cars, arrive at the Birkenau siding, and are immediately divided into those to be gassed right away and those to be held in the camp, or moved to related camps, as laborers. There follows an account, superb in its terse eloquence but also familiar, of the steps that reduced Levi and the other Italians to a state of numb abjection by the indoctrination procedures at Monowitz-Buna, the subsidiary camp to which Levi was assigned. The men are then given their work, excruciatingly difficult physical labor. At night, they are forced to sleep in pairs on straw mattresses no more than two feet wide—a space so narrow they have to sleep end to end, each facing the other's feet.

The nights are filled with awful dreams, and also a more immediate problem. Fed nothing but watery soup during the day, the men need to relieve themselves every few hours. Yet the block has no latrine, only a bucket next to the night-guard, a bucket that has to be emptied, when it is full, by the last person who uses it. The veteran prisoners know a way out of this: they have "refined their senses to such a degree that, while still in their bunks, they are miraculously able to distinguish if the level is at a dangerous point, purely on the basis of the sound that the sides of the bucket make." Thus the job of removal falls to the inexperienced:

> The night-guard unexpectedly jumps from his corner and seizes us, scribbles down our number, hands us a pair of wooden shoes and the bucket and drives us out into the middle of the snow, shivering and sleepy. It is our task to shuffle to the latrine with the bucket which knocks against our bare calves, disgustingly warm; it is full beyond all reasonable limit, and inevitably with the shaking some of the content overflows on our feet, so that however repugnant this duty may be, it is always preferable that we, and not our neighbor, be assigned to do it.

There's a lesson in this more striking than the usual one of man's infinitely adaptable nature under stress. By telling us that it is better to sleep with your feet wet with urine than to sleep facing someone else's feet similarly fouled, Levi is elucidating what for him became the essential activity of survival: the division of every moment of the day into a series of graded sensations of pleasure and pain. Levi moved through physical sensation the way a mountain climber negotiates the varied abutments and hollows of his terrain—now relaxing, now stiffening, now guarding for a fall. And because of his attention to every moment of pain, and his understanding of it as a physical rather than a spiritual fact, Levi may have been able to savor the moments of surcease without being seduced

CONTENDING IDEOLOGIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Edited by James Leatt, Theo Kneifel and Klaus Nürnberger

The late 1970s and the early 1980s have been turbulent times in South Africa. Violence in black urban areas, the banning of black consciousness organizations, deaths in detention, growing black labor militance, and mass removals of blacks have all contributed to the state of unrest. And the events on South Africa's borders — the advent of Afro-Marxist socialist Angola and Mozambique and Robert Mugabe's socialist victory in Zimbabwe — have served to heighten the ideological conflict in South Africa.

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or overwhelmed by them. He was capable of pleasure. This book, which is filled, like all camp memoirs, with degradation and suffering and humiliations beyond all imagining, records moments of bodily comfort so intensely satisfying—an extra bowl of soup, the warmth of the sun during some ghastly forced march—that one almost cries out with joy.

LEVI BECOMES a psychologist of sensation. Greater pains, he says, usually block out lesser ones, a law of mental perspective that effectually prevents the dissolution of consciousness. But he also says, in another context, that small blows may sometimes serve as a restorative precisely because they force one to concentrate on immediate discomforts and therefore to forget the misery of one's general situation. So both large and small pains have their uses. There were many ways to die in the camp, and few ways to live, but surely those who could not put suffering to use were lost.

In accounting for his own survival, Levi has always stressed how much luck he had, and how much he was helped by those stronger than himself. Yet when he writes of the others, those weaker or less lucky or less adaptable—those incapable of making the calculation of pain from moment to moment—he does so with an unyielding, harsh truthfulness that makes one shudder:

> In history and in life one sometimes seems to glimpse a ferocious law which states: "To he that has, will be given; to he that has not, will be taken away." In the *Lager*, where man is alone, and where the struggle for life is reduced to its primordial mechanism, this unjust law is openly in force, is recognized by all. With the adaptable, the strong and astute individuals, even the leaders willingly keep contact, sometimes even friendly contact, because they hope later to perhaps derive some benefit. But with the *Muselmänner* [camp slang for the doomed], the men in decay, it is not even worth speaking, because one knows already they will complain and will speak about what they used to eat at home. Even less worthwhile is it to make friends with them, because they have no distinguished acquaintances in camp, they do not gain any extra rations, they do not work in profitable Kommandos and they know no secret method of organizing. And in any case, one knows that they are only here on a visit . . .

Levi is not a Jewish saint. In the camps, too much pity, too inclusive a registration of the suffering of others, could lead to a disastrous lapsing out, a loss of concentration and hardihood that would be fatal. As far as we can make out, Levi saved a few drowning people when he could do so without overwhelming risk—and for the rest stuck to his own interests and those of his friends.

Only later, much later, in the stories collected in *Moments of Reprieve*, was Levi able to turn to the *Muselmänner* with anything more than a passing gaze of silent grief. The book is composed of brief sketches, often very bare, in which a single man, separating himself from the crowd and refusing the role of victim, asserts some claim of identity, some version of selfhood. Imposters, scoundrels, religious fanatics, moralists of orthodoxy too gentle to steal even when starving, they all draw on some reserve of ego or craft or idiosyncrasy. They step forward for an instant and recede: the story is their monument, their sole monument. When you read these skeletal stories they seem too thin, but afterward you realize the thinness represents a state of being in which a single impulse briefly survives mortal weakness.

LEVI WRITES of the victims of the camp without "survivor's guilt." But in 1944, when he was actually in the camp, the activity of self-preservation, unheroic in his own eyes, took its toll. In *Survival in Auschwitz*, he frequently asks whether he is still a man, whether his friends are still men. He uses the word "man" in both senses—human and masculine. What he means by masculinity is self-respect, and also an ideal of civility, honor, kindliness. He is not by nature a self-deprecating person, but his ruined state as a prisoner fills him with shame.

In order to live, and also out of simple attraction, he is repeatedly drawn to prisoners shrewder and more resourceful than himself, men who have mastered the art of organizing—of stealing goods from the camp stores or factory and then trading them or fashioning them into something else and trading that. Levi becomes almost vivacious in describing these schemes, the complexity of which, in this setting, can be startling. The inmates of Auschwitz, who had no chance of surviving if they merely obeyed the rules and ate what was given them, appear to have produced a classical model of rational economic behavior out of nothing—out of pieces of wood and stone, scraps of metal, cloth, and bread. For the resourceful, the end result was a bit more food. Levi's own contribution to this agitated and desperate system of barter is relatively minor; in the Buna rubber plant he hacks brooms into pieces, which he then smuggles back into the camp in his clothes, reassembles with steel pegs, and trades off to the block leaders—German prisoners many of them, who pride themselves on the cleanly swept floors of their inhuman quarters.

But the broom trade did not save his life. Levi survived, first, because an Italian civilian worker named Lorenzo gave him some extra soup every day for six months, and second, because his skills as a chemist were of use to the Germans. Before being admitted to the laboratory, however, he has to submit to a bizarre trial—an examination in organic chemistry before a blue-eyed, fair-haired Doktor Pannwitz. For once, the spirit of absurdity nearly overwhelms him. Bald, covered with sores, smelling of turnips and cabbage, wearing torn and filthy clothes, and surely destined in the end for selection to the gas chambers, Levi feels himself unreal. Yet he conquers his dismay and performs. His old student vanity as an exam champion saves him. The remnants of a normal ego remain.

SURVIVAL in Auschwitz turns out to be, of all things, a book about the forms of civilization. Levi describes the system of death and survival in the camp, but he also presents a variety of relationships—economic, spiritual, fraternal, and even cultural—that can only be called the contours of a social world. As much as any man of the 19th century, Levi believed in civilization; he believed it possessed a moral and spiritual as well as a juridical value. Naive as it may seem, his stubbornness seems to have carried him through. He was not particularly brave. He did not choose the way of armed revolt, as a few Jewish inmates did, dying in the act of killing some of the S.S. But he was courageous, steadfast, enduring. He means more to us, this mild, cultivated, and defenseless man, more to us than the truculent and motivated types, the saints, the communists, the religious and ideological personalities, all of whom entered the camps armed, so to speak, to resist. Levi went in naked and clothed himself.

A very modest and fragmentary work, *Survival in Auschwitz* has an emotional power entirely disproportionate to its size and ambition. And yet when it came out in Italy in 1947, it sold 2,500 copies

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and disappeared. Levi had never thought of himself as a writer, so he continued to work in chemistry, supporting himself and his new wife with a variety of jobs. But in the late 1950s, when he was established as a technician in a varnish factory, he spoke at an exhibition in Turin devoted to the deportations. To his surprise, he discovered that his book had gained, among young people at least, something of a following. *Survival in Auschwitz* was republished in 1958 to great success, and a few years later, emboldened by this acclaim, Levi completed a sequel, known in Britain as the *The Truce* (again, a literal translation of the title) and published here as *The Reawakening*. (Both books are beautifully translated by Stuart Woolf.)

THE FIRST book ends with a diary-style chapter, "The Story of Ten Days," which tells of the time between the flight of the Germans and the Russian liberation of the camp. For more than a week in January 1945 the sick and starving inmates were left in the camp on their own. To walk out of the camp, in winter, was unthinkable—no one was strong enough—and the corpses piled up on the open ground. The final pages of the book are written in a whisper. At last, on January 27, four Russians on horseback pass through the camp entrance. But Levi is too weak to feel much of anything, even relief. *The Reawakening* picks up from here.

In some ways, it is an even better book than *Survival in Auschwitz*. Though he feels anguish enough, Levi is no longer calling on the bitterest of his memories, and if the writing lacks that last degree of personal sweetness that makes his self-preoccupation in *Survival* a model of integrity, pride, and true consciousness, it is also freer and bolder in describing everything outside himself. The book was written 16 years after the events. By 1961, we can guess, Levi feels no need to hold back, no need to guard against dissolution; even his descriptions of suffering are more fluent and expressive than before. In an early chapter, two Russian nurses with rough hands bathe the surviving prisoners, and Levi writes an account of a man whose limbs have contracted into the fetal position—a man too frightened to take a bath—that is a purer distillation of horror and compassion than anything in *Survival in Auschwitz*. The system of annihilation has receded; the individual case now begins to reassert its claims.

This non-writer has become a master portraitist, both of individual men and women and of postwar cities and landscapes. *The Reawakening* has a peculiar shadowed quality, as Levi now captures scenes attempted less often in the literature of the war, the moment *after*—a time when life has broken down into its constitutive elements:

> In those days, and in those parts, soon after the front had passed by, a high wind was blowing over the face of the earth; the world around us seemed to have returned to primeval Chaos, and was swarming with scalene, defective, abnormal human specimens; each of them bestirred himself, with blind or deliberate movements, in anxious search of his own place, of his own sphere, as the particles of the four elements are described as doing in the verse-cosmogonies of the Ancients.

Europe, as a civilization and a set of social relations, has simply dissolved. The Red Army holds sway, but its grip, in contrast to that of the S.S., is loose, improvisatory, and erratic, an unstable compound of brusque command and benevolence. In this vacuum of power, anomalous groups of people—defeated armies, refugees, survivors—brokenly wander about the countryside or travel in disconsolate convoys here and there.

LEVI BECOMES a traveler himself. He is first evacuated to transit camps in Poland, and then, just when expecting a turn south to the mountains and the sea—Italy—he is sent, along with 1,400 other Italians, to a camp far to the north, in White Russia, near Minsk. There, slowly, and in a misery of homesickness, he recuperates from the camp.

The Reawakening encompasses several types of literature. It is a somber, picaresque tale: an account of strange and resourceful people who met at a time of loose social bonds; a book of adventure, vagabondage, exile, and return; a record of meals cadged, floors slept on, journeys endured. It is also a kind of ironic travel book—a 20th-century travel book, in which the homeless are chased from one disaster to another.

Levi has survived degradation, illness, the near extinction of life. Now, as he restores himself, the sudden pangs of normal appetite break in on his lingering state of debility with an almost terrifying sharpness. Better than any book I know, *The Reawakening* conveys the surge of active convalescence. Every cell strains for health. But in Levi there is also a young man's peculiar, shamed bit-

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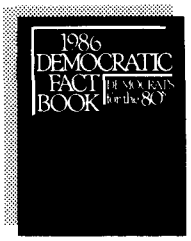

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terness and nostalgia, a longing for the pleasures that he has not yet enjoyed—sexual love, professional success, the affections of a family.

In his diffident way, he involves us closely in the story of his regained health and spirit, convincing us, without ever saying so, that he is writing about the recovery of Europe. Not economic or material recovery: for him civilization is meaningless without the possibility of pleasure, and this book about the recrudescence of life offers one version of the way consciousness, brought to the brink of nullity, restores itself by slowly increasing its demands for pleasure—the pleasure of companionship, of Italianness as a type of sociability, of landscape and adventure, and then, finally, pleasure in the arts.

Reading these two stirring little books, one begins to see that Levi was protected, and perhaps delivered, by a certain stolidity of temperament, and this very same quality accounts for his special qualities as a writer. We tend to think of the camp survivors as spiritual figures—as marked by a special religious strength or reverence for life. But Levi is such a writer only insofar as he created what Norman Mailer once called "a metaphysic of the belly"—in Levi's case, a metaphysic of spoons, of grease, of shit, of bread. He treated his experience in hell largely as a material phenomenon, not as a metaphor or a dream or a curse. From this we may cynically conclude that when a modern writer confronts the literal abyss rather than the hell he finds in himself, the urge to make metaphors and to undertake spiritual adventures disappears. Yet what I have called Levi's stolidity—his stubborn persistence in a humanistic response to the apocalypse—should be seen not as stupidity or a failure of imagination, but as a personal and cultural achievement of striking value.

LEVI ADORES chemistry. His love for it is the ground bass of his identity, more persistent and more pervasive than his Jewishness, or his Italianness, or his history as a camp survivor. *The Periodic Table* can be read in part as a hidden account of how Levi came to write his first two books by studying science. Each of the 21 chapters is named after an element—zinc, iron, gold, argon, and so on—and each element calls forth an area of Levi's experience, or an anecdote or lesson of modern times. In the middle of a chapter devoted to his memories of a university course in chemistry, Levi lists the properties of zinc: "They make tubs out of it for laundry, it is not an element which says much to the imagination, it is gray and its salts are colorless . . . in short, it is a boring metal." Why are we given this unexceptionable piece of information? The point falls into place with exhilarating ease:

> The course notes contained a detail which at first reading had escaped me, namely that the so tender and delicate zinc, so yielding to acid which gulps it down in a single mouthful, behaves, however, in a very different fashion when it is very pure: then it obstinately resists the attack. One could draw from this two conflicting philosophical conclusions: the praise of purity, which protects from evil like a coat of mail; the praise of impurity, which gives rise to changes, in other words, to life. I discarded the first, disgustingly moralistic, and I lingered to consider the second, which I found more congenial. In order for the wheel to turn, for life to be lived, impurities are needed, and the infertilities of infertilities in the soil, too, as is known, if it is to be fertile. Dissension, diversity, the grain of salt and mustard are needed: Fascism does not want them, forbids them. . . . [As a Jew], I am the impurity that makes the zinc react, I am the grain of salt or mustard.

Mussolini wanted a political life for the nation of pure "spirit," in reaction to which Levi and his friends took refuge in the police-report dryness of quantitative analysis. How many milligrams of iron and lead could be found in a gram of powder? *There* was a truth that couldn't be corrupted by politics. If spirit and matter can be conceived as opposites, the latter became the consoling, revivifying choice. Chemistry, for all it foul acidic odors, smelled clean. Levi was enchanted by the sheer materiality of chemistry and by the neutrality of the elements of life. Recalling an excursion outside Turin in which he searched for chicken shit (invaluable for making certain lipsticks), he reflects that "matter is matter, neither noble nor vile, infinitely transformable, and its proximate origin is of no value whatsoever." In such effusions—his insistence on the gaiety of the chemist's task—one hears the exhilaration of a young man of sensitive and self-doubting nature who comes to realize that existence can never be an entirely subjective phenomenon. What a relief! The world exists outside "taste," outside "sensibility."

One now understands something that was puzzling in his earlier volumes: the obvious lack of "psychology." No matter how briefly observed, Levi's characters have density of being—he feels the presence of every individual. But they aren't men and women molded by their unconscious. He is fascinated not by the complexity of mental activity but by the interpenetration of desire and matter, and by the sensuous nature of things in all their varying states of degradation, transformation, ennoblement. Even Auschwitz he saw as degraded matter; and therefore he could conceive that it would pass into another state. As a political and philosophical response to the attempted annihilation of an entire people, this can only strike us as inadequate. As one man's response to catastrophe, it is startling and endlessly suggestive.

CHEMISTRY made Levi a powerfully original writer, but then writing brought out his dissatisfaction with chemistry. His old vocation as industrial technician slipped away, and major literary ambitions took over. Fiction beckoned. Our view of him is incomplete (one novel and two books of stories remain untranslated), but after reading his 1982 epic novel, *If Not Now, When?*, we are more impressed than ever, alas, by his modest earlier books.

If Not Now, When? is a strenuous attempt both to embrace the traditions of the Eastern European Jews—the Yiddish-speaking Jews of the shtetl whom Levi had not known before Auschwitz—and to dispel the shibboleth that such Jews never resisted the Nazis. It is a long celebration of *partisanska*, Jewish style—the wandering life, struggles, acts of sabotage, minor victories and defeats of a group of Russian Jewish irregulars (stragglers from the Red Army, survivors of the *Einsatzkommandos*) who gathered behind German lines during the war. Preparing to write, Levi not only scanned the records of partisan warfare but studied Yiddish. He immersed himself in shtetl literature and the traditions of the rabbis. His generosity and sympathy shows in every scene. A people without military traditions in 1943, his Jewish partisans spend much time debating the ethics and purpose of what they are doing—an exasperating and comical practice that gives this book a gentleness of tone perhaps unknown in the whole of partisan literature.

But something else turns up, too—a willed overexplicitness and rhetoric not seen in Levi's work before. There is too much of this sort of thing:

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> They were tired, poor, and dirty, but not defeated: children of merchants, tailors, rabbis, and cantors, they had armed themselves with weapons taken from the Germans, they had earned the right to wear those tattered uniforms, without chevrons, and they had tasted several times the bitter food of killing.

The writing has an incantatory and orotund rhythm—conventional, impersonal, almost crude—that approaches the banality of propaganda, or the narration of a documentary film. Amends are being made here, and reassurance and inspiration offered.

Levi has tried to get all of Eastern Europe into one novel, all of Jewish resistance and martyrdom and ethical striving. And the result is that in *If Not Now, When?* we miss Levi, not only because his gently incandescent presence is so pleasing, but because Levi needs to be a character himself in order to anchor his profoundest impressions of other people. In a century in which the self, as it is defined in our most ambitious literature, makes demands beyond anything ever encountered before, Levi's modesty has a kind of tonic force, even authority. This writer-chemist has opened spaces for the human presence that more omnivorous souls have blocked out of view.

AS ONE reads Levi's dignified and lucid books about the contours of hell, one's awe before the characteristic spiritual striving of modernism—the energies of negation and self-torment, the loathing of rationality, the disgust for culture, the "sympathy for the abyss," as Thomas Mann called it—does not lessen but falls into a different perspective. Literature matters, but it does not matter absolutely. Sanity matters, too. Levi's gravity of tone reveals a temperamental equanimity that can only be called a supreme sense of the fitness of things.

To find its equal you have to go back through the whole of the 20th century—to Chekhov's stories, letters, and his report from a Russian penal colony, *The Island of Sakhalin*. Like Chekhov, Levi was born with the soul of a poet but was drawn to science by both interest and the necessity of making a living. Chekhov wrote newspaper sketches and stories when he was a very young man—he couldn't stop writing—whereas Levi was thrust into literature by personal and historical catastrophe. But the training of the one in medicine and the other in chemistry obviously affected, and perhaps determined, the kind of writer each became. They are not, of course, equals, but they share a marvelously even-keeled sense of life's pleasures and pains, habits of directness and lucidity, and a sense of the dignity and self-sufficiency of the writer as craftsman.

Levi's modesty can be more than just tonic. A wonderful writer, he is also, in his gentle way, and despite what he may think himself, a hero. For he suggests a possibility that modern people, and intellectuals in particular, have regarded with almost punitive irony (as if to kill the hope within themselves): that they might endure some supreme test by holding fast to nothing more than the personal powers they can command. Of course his victory over his circumstances can hardly be appropriated as our own. Still, he has restored knightly luster to qualities we have regarded as inadequate and even pathetic, qualities we have nearly ironized out of existence—dignity, personal cultivation, even lowly patience.

SAMURAI SNOBS

Saturday Night: A Backstage History of Saturday Night Live by Doug Hill and Jeff Weingrad

(Beech Tree Books/William Morrow, 510 pp., $17.95)

The legacy of John Belushi is for rent at your local video store. For a mere three or four bucks—or $29.95, for trivia compulsives who insist on ownership—anyone with a VCR can feast on *The Best of John Belushi*, a 60-minute package of the burly comic's sketches from "Saturday Night Live." The word "feast" is used advisedly. In these highlights from the golden era (1975-79) of the long-running and, to some, landmark NBC show, it is food, not any other performer, that constantly threatens to upstage the star. Belushi's Elizabeth Taylor stuffs herself with chicken; his samurai deli waiter uses his sword to slice hero sandwiches; his Vito Corleone gags on an orange; his Greek luncheonette counterman incessantly pushes cheeseburgers and chips. Not that food is the exclusive topic of Belushi's comedy—ethnic stereotypes are equally ubiquitous. In addition to the Japanese, Italian, and Greek caricatures, there's a German (Beethoven, sounding like Göring), an Irishman (Belushi makes no attempt at the accent), an Englishman (Joe Cocker, singing "A Little Help from My Friends"), and most persistently, a black. According to *The Best of John Belushi*—which was assembled by Lorne Michaels, the creator and producer of "Saturday Night Live," and Judith Jacklin Belushi, the comedian's widow—nothing is more representative of the Belushi spirit than the neo-Negro "Blues Brothers" numbers he performed with his pal Dan Aykroyd. The theme song that opens and closes this compilation tape is "I'm a Soul Man."

To which one wants to respond, in paraphrase of Belushi, "Soul? But noooooooo!" Even dexterous use of the slow-motion replay button is unlikely to uncover much soul in *The Best of John Belushi*. The humor swings between the juvenile and the cruel, lacking as much in heart as in laughs. Except during the Joe Cocker routine—which predates SNL, having been perfected by Belushi during his early '70s tutelage in the off-Broadway revue *Lemmings*—the viewer keeps wondering what all the heat was about. Why did this monotonous performer and his SNL co-stars spark a national sensation, complete with magazine covers and fanatical fans, akin to that once produced by Lucille Ball, Sid Caesar, and Jackie Gleason? Why did Hollywood, having expended Belushi's gift for food jokes in his first major film role (*National Lampoon's Animal House*), squander millions on bigger and bigger canvases for his limited talents? (The Belushi filmography—*Goin' South*, *Old Boyfriends*, *1941*, *The Blues Brothers*, *Continental Divide*, *Neighbors*—is unlikely to be the occasion for a revival-house retrospective any time soon.) And why did one of the most valuable journalists of our day, Bob Woodward, pour months of his time into the task of pinning

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down the exact circumstances of Belushi's demise and then write an encyclopedic account (*Wired*) of the predictably grotesque findings as if they were of the same historic importance as *The Final Days*? One might think that Belushi—the most representative figure, as well as the first casualty, of the original Not Ready for Prime Time Players of "Saturday Night"—was a seminal figure in American renegade humor, the baby boomers' answer to Lenny Bruce.

He was not, and neither are the colleagues who've survived him. Since leaving SNL, the alumni of the original cast have sought their true level. Chevy Chase's considerable charms are now parceled out ungenerously in junk movies like *Spies Like Us* (also starring Dan Aykroyd) and the *National Lampoon* "Vacation" series (not to be confused with the Bob Hope-Bing Crosby "Road" pictures). Jane Curtin stars in "Kate & Allie," a hit network sitcom that SNL might once have rudely parodied. Laraine Newman, Gilda Radner, and Garrett Morris are heard from mainly in disposable films or second-rank television programs. While Bill Murray, perhaps the most talented of the group, starred with Aykroyd in the largest-grossing Hollywood comedy in history, *Ghostbusters*, the movie's jokes were pitched at a far younger (and sillier) audience than the SNL generation. That audience has since pledged its fickle heart, at least for a year or two, to the "brat pack" (one of whose brattier members, Anthony Michael Hall, was a regular on last season's revamped SNL).

As for Lorne Michaels, the guru who first recruited these bright young talents for NBC over a decade ago, he retreated to SNL once again last fall, after an absence during which he tried and failed to match the success of the show's performing stars. During his hiatus, the biggest phenomenon in SNL's history came and went: Eddie Murphy, a suburbs-bred Blues Brother who effortlessly achieves the campy re-creations of black stereotypes (e.g., Buckwheat of *The Little Rascals*) to which Belushi could only slobberingly aspire.

Forlorn as the SNL team may seem now, however, its legend remains. It's now part of pop culture mythology that in its early years, this ragtag weekly revue was revolutionary television, keeping the spirit of the 1960s alive in the heart of corporate America, during the semiclandestine time slot of 11:30 to 1 on Saturday nights. (The slot had previously been a dumping ground for Johnny Carson reruns.) Tom Shales of the *Washington Post*, in an early review of the show in 1975, wrote that "Saturday Night Live" (then still known as "Saturday Night") was

> probably the first network series produced by and for the television generation—those late-war and postwar babies who were the first to have TV as a sitter. They loved it in the 50s, hated it in the 60s, and now they are trying to take it over in the 70s. . . . [It is] a live, lively, raucously disdainful view of a world that television has largely shaped. Or misshaped.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

As one of the show's executives put it, SNL was "the post-Watergate victory party for the Woodstock generation." One wants to believe that the party amounted to more than the food gags and crude ethnic humor that Michaels and Mrs. Belushi have culled from the archives in their representative sampling of the "best."

That faith is hard to sustain after reading *Saturday Night*, the highly readable and mighty depressing "backstage history" of the show by Doug Hill and Jeff Weingrad. This book may well prove that SNL is an important chapter in pop-culture history—but not exactly the salutary chapter that one might have wished.

Hill and Weingrad do start out as fans. Their first chapter has an epigram from Fitzgerald's "Echoes of the Jazz Age," and somewhat later the authors characterize SNL as

> the first program of its kind to commit itself consciously to the subconscious, to emulate as much as it could the spirit of artistic abandon embodied and endorsed by the gods of 20th-century hip. Baudelaire, William Blake, D. H. Lawrence, William Burroughs, Henry Miller, Jack Kerouac, Lenny Bruce, Ken Kesey, the Beatles, and Hunter S. Thompson were as much the fathers of "Saturday Night" as Kovacs, Carson, Benny and Berle. Dan Aykroyd called it Gonzo Television. They were video guerrillas, he'd say. Every show was an assault mission.

Yet Hill and Weingrad, try as they do to be friendly, are such thorough and nonpartisan reporters that they can't prevent the much different and sorrier truth from seeping into and finally overwhelming their narrative. As the reader soon learns, Lorne Michaels resembles Fitzgerald only in that he enjoyed "circulating in some of the higher, hipper echelons of New York City chic," he loved spending money extravagantly,

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and he, Paul Simon, and the writer Michael O'Donoghue threw an annual "elegant lawn party" in the Hamptons at which the guests were required to dress in Jazz Age white. (Michaels, who desperately hoped that the Not Ready for Prime Time Players would be the "Beatles of comedy," got the idea after having "heard of a similar party Paul McCartney once threw.") The aesthetics of SNL were also more white than "20th-century hip." The show's players and writers were as gluttonous as Belushi's on-air characters—for fame, money, and drugs. They were all too ready for prime time.

IN THEIR behavior and comedy, one sees not so much the keeping of the Woodstock flame as the dawning of the age of narcissism. SNL was not a link between William Blake and the video culture. Nor was it, like the prototypical NBC television revue of the early 1950s, "Your Show of Shows," a breeding ground for writers who would later transform, dominate, and, at their best, elevate mass American comic taste. (Neil Simon, Carl Reiner, Woody Allen, Mel Brooks, and Larry Gelbart, among others, all came of creative age writing for Sid Caesar and Imogene Coca on "Show of Shows" or its immediate offshoots.) Rather, the history of SNL is an object lesson in how the rebellious spirits of the 1960s were bought, packaged, tamed, and sold during the 1970s—thus making the country safe for the return of the complacent, business-as-usual ethic of the 1980s.

The Hill-Weingrad *Saturday Night* unfolds a paradigmatic morality tale of the period that has been played out in many other fields—journalism included. As the authors note, Jann Wenner, a constant presence in the Rockefeller Center studio on Saturday nights, turned *Rolling Stone* into a "house organ" for SNL. What could have been added is that SNL's decline into pap almost exactly parallels the transformation of Wenner's once provocative alternative news outlet into a celebrity-fixated, teen-generation *People*. The SNL historical model similarly fits such phenomena as the public lives of Jerry Rubin and Eldridge Cleaver, the history of the *National Lampoon* (once a breeding ground for SNL writers), the on- and offscreen progress of Jane Fonda, and the rise of a generation of movie-industry "baby moguls" trained (to win, not struggle) by SDS.

With the major exception of Michaels, a Canadian joke-writer, most of the original contributors and performers on SNL did start out on high ground. They actually were incendiary, Hunter Thompson-esque humorists prior to enlisting in network television. They had toiled in the fringe political comedy troupes and revues of the late '60s and early '70s—the various *Lampoon* stage and radio shows, Boston's The Proposition, Chicago's Second City, New York's Channel One. They followed what Michaels described as a countercultural comedy "code": "knowing drug references, casual profanity, a permissive attitude toward sex, a deep disdain for show business convention, blistering political satire, and bitter distrust of corporate power."

Some of this flavor did turn up on SNL, especially in the early days, when the biting and clever commercial parodies may have cost more to produce than genuine commercials brought in. Ralph Nader, a guest host, was given a national forum for his assault on oil companies. Gerald Ford's pardon of Richard Nixon—not to mention his physical clumsiness—was so strenuously ridiculed that SNL may have contributed to his electoral defeat. Michael O'Donoghue, the most obnoxious and probably the most talented writer on staff, could give full vent to a nihilistic, ghoulish, "cut and slash" comic sensibility that really did mock middle-class pieties (however sadistically).

But the predominant mission of the show was mandated from the outset by its network underwriter—to deliver those crucial demographics that television had lost during the '60s:

> NBC's ratings in the 18-34 age group were dismal, as were those of the other networks. There was, the affiliates knew, a whole blooming, unpredictable but overflowing youth market out there that wasn't, for the most part, watching TV. Millions of consumers were going to waste, and advertisers were aching to get at them.

SNL became the instrument for relieving that ache.

What's fascinating about the selling out of SNL is that it happened organically and internally—rather than as a consequence of outside pressure or censorship. The show's first breakout star, Chevy Chase, needed only to make the cover of *New York* (which labeled him a potential successor to Johnny Carson) to "become the very thing he'd been parodying—a plastic celebrity." Self-indulgent drug use and arrogance toward his fellow cast members soon followed, and inevitably led to his departure for Hollywood. This same pattern repeated itself with nearly every performer who hit it big on SNL. Years later even Eddie Murphy became a temperamental monster the moment he first achieved acclaim and rose above the show's low, Mickey Rooney-Judy Garland starting salary. Most of the original Not Ready for Prime Time Players quickly became younger, druggier parodies of such typically preening guest hosts as Paul Simon and Milton Berle, both of whom were less interested in rehearsing their sketches than in protecting their bald spots (Simon with lighting, Berle with shoe polish) from the camera's prying eye. Only the means and degree of self-destruction

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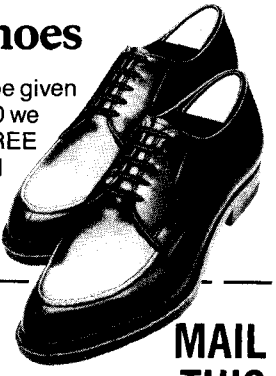

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varied from SNL star to star—ranging from Belushi's fatal overdose to Radner's bulimic masochism. Jane Curtin was the sole member of the original cast who left the show in the same levelheaded condition in which she had arrived.

ONCE THE SNL performers became consumers in the "youth market" that their show sold its products to, their humor inexorably reflected the marketplace as well. No one had to tell the cast how to sell out; their off-screen perks and amusements corrupted their aesthetics insidiously. Just as the 1980s show business descendants of SNL are the vapid, moneyed post-adolescents of "brat pack" movies, so it is now clear that the real antecedents of Belushi and his male co-stars were not the Beats but the "rat pack" of the 1950s. Substitute coke for booze, and Garrett Morris for Dean Martin's and Frank Sinatra's token black crony, Sammy Davis Jr., and the parallels in decadence fall into place.

Soulman Belushi, for instance, was an unabashed old-school misogynist who frequently threatened to resign if all the female writers were not fired. ("He believed, or pretended to believe, that women weren't funny, and he said so all the time.") The staff's penchant for breast jokes incited the feminist protest of even Raquel Welch, and one of the show's most controversial early sketches was a parody of Betty Rollin's *First, You Cry* in which the husband was seen as the principal victim of his wife's mastectomy. Morris was alternately ignored and ridiculed. "For all the professed radicalism of the writers on the show," report Hill and Weingrad, "they seemed unable to produce material that dealt with black issues in anything beyond the coarsest terms, if they dealt with them at all." In the end, Morris was pigeonholed in drag impersonations of Ella Fitzgerald, Tina Turner, Diana Ross, and Pearl Bailey. Only at the last minute was he spared performing in "a parody commercial for a toothpaste called 'Tarbrush,' which darkened blacks' supposedly shiny white teeth."

Such humor is as establishment as any establishment that SNL had originally set out to attack. Hill and Weingrad call it anti-comedy: "The comic release [SNL] provided came not from pointing up the human foibles we all share, but from the more cynical exercise of pointing an accusing finger at the banality of others." That banality was usually found in people poorer, older, or less "white" than the SNL cast. The butts of most of the sketches were consistent with those on *The Best of John Belushi*—"wild and crazy" bachelors from Eastern Europe, or "nerds," or Roseanne Roseannadanna and Emily Litella, the idiots of Weekend Update. Chase, the anchorman of Update, introduced himself each week by saying "I'm Chevy Chase, and you're not," and that signature line could sum up the entire show's sensibility: peering through a cocaine fog out of the limousine window, the SNL stars saw themselves as the haves, and everyone else as the have-nots. Garry Trudeau, who did survive both the '70s and success without losing his comic bite, criticized the "screw-you" humor of SNL with precision in a commencement address in 1981:

> For all its innovations this kind of satire tells society's nebbishes that they are right about themselves, that they *are* nobodies, that to be so un-hip as to be disadvantaged, to be ignorant, to be physically infirm, or black, or even female is to invite contempt. . . . It reflects a sort of callousness so prevalent in the survivalist ethic. If this is to become a society intolerant of failure and uncompassionate in the face of suffering, then we are lost.

The ethic of SNL lingers on not merely in Hollywood's and television's ever more efficient and ruthless methods for cashing in on the youth market but, far more dangerously, in the society at large. The young people who might be today's SNL staffers now seem to gravitate toward arbitrage, where the money and coke may even be better than they were at NBC. Perhaps today's inside traders grew up on the best of John Belushi as Belushi did on "The Honeymooners." The current version of SNL panders to the times much as the original Not Ready for Prime Time Players now do: instead of mocking the present occupant of the White House last season, Lorne Michaels enlisted the president's son as a guest host and let him exploit the show for self-promotional effect. Maybe Michaels got the idea from "Laugh-In," the cautious SNL precursor that helped Richard Nixon humanize his image during the 1968 campaign by making a cameo appearance to deliver the line, "Sock it to me!" Lest anyone doubt that there's a pattern to history, it should be remembered that Michaels worked on "Laugh-In" shortly after he immigrated to the United States from Canada.

Before returning to SNL last year, Michaels briefly and unsuccessfully attempted to conquer prime time with another "Laugh-In" clone, a variety series called "The New Show." As Hill and Weingrad tell it, one of that program's writers, Tom Davis, "was sitting around [its] offices with some of the other writers one day and noticed that they were all talking about real estate deals. 'Funny how different it was from the other show,' he thought. 'The other show was filled with incredibly hungry people.' " The story of *Saturday Night* is the recurrent but still depressing saga of what happens when a hungry, renegade American generation confuses a belated invitation to success with a license to pig out.

FRANK RICH

Frank Rich is the drama critic for the *New York Times*.

EL GULAG

Against All Hope: The Prison Memoirs of Armando Valladares by Armando Valladares

(Knopf, 416 pp., $18.95)

The love affair between successive generations of *bien pensant* Western intellectuals and the revolutionary communist regimes that have come to power since the storming of the Winter Palace is—Marx's inane aphorism notwithstanding—simultaneously a profound tragedy and a gruesome farce. The story is tragic (not simply pathetic) because a passionate hope for a better world, even one that entails a stubborn refusal to despair of that hope, is a moral stance of considerable nobility. The matter was put quite well recently by George Steiner—hardly a left-wing apologist—when, speaking of Sartre, he observed that there were

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two possible reactions to the awful reality of communism. "One is to say 'Ha! I told you so. What a fool you were to expect otherwise.' . . . The other reaction is to say, 'Damn it to hell! One more great human hope gone to bits.'" This decent feeling of mourning for a great human hope is what is missing from neoconservatism; though its anti-communism is correct, its way with ideas is coarse and vulgar when compared with the tradition it criticizes.

This is surely not to deny that the story, particularly now when the bad news is so available, is not also abjectly farcical. All those tourists of the revolution, seeing nothing and approving everything. The repulsive examples continue to pile up, and it is not pure polemic to cite them. For are Beatrice Webb's chirpy accolades for the OGPU so very different from Noam Chomsky's breezy dismissals of the first accounts of the Cambodian genocide? Or were Henry Wallace and Owen Lattimore's bracing gambols through the Soviet slave labor camps of Magadan and Kolyma ("a combination of Hudson's Bay Company and the TVA" was Lattimore's unforgivable summing up) any more intellectually disgraceful than the more incoherent but equally heartfelt gushings—the "right ons," the chants of "Cuba Sí, Yanqui No"—of the young (and not so young) Americans like myself who traveled to Cuba in the 1960s and '70s? (To each decade its rhetorical style, to each generation its socialist Eden.)

THE ANSWER, of course, is no. The rhetoric of the ideological pilgrimage is identical. Only now you can go south as well as east. South may even be better, but, in any event, the act of checking one's brains at the border has remained the same. Surely only the language of romantic love (and, at least in the case of Cuba and perhaps Nicaragua, that of Club Med) can account for the phenomenon. This impression is, if anything, strengthened by the degree to which those who have repudiated their radical sympathies have done so using the vocabulary of the disenchanted lover. Think of a slogan like "Which Side Are You On?" the *mot d'ordre* first of American Stalinism and now of neoconservatism. That's not a thought, it's a rock 'n' roll lyric: "Who Do You Love?" in political drag.

To be sure, the average fellow traveler is hardly distinguished by constancy. Typically, Western supporters of Marxist tyrannies have practiced a distinctly suburban kind of "serial monogamy." The results have been mixed. Some mistresses are easy to shake—the Soviet Union is the obvious case in point (unless you happen to be Gus Hall)—while others skillfully retain their allure. But none has so successfully held on or given such good value as the Republic of Cuba and its maximum leader, the Ninon de l'Enclos of the East Bloc, Fidel Castro.

Aristotle thought that physical beauty was a virtue. True or not, it's certainly a turn-on, as are vivacity, charm, energy, and eloquence. And few peoples anywhere in the world possess these qualities in such abundance as do Cubans. They are a vibrant embodiment of the old saying: "When the right person does the wrong thing, it's right; when the wrong person does the right thing, it's wrong." It would be impossible to underestimate this aesthetic and aestheticizing element. (I sometimes wonder whether the contrast between the passionate identification anti-war Americans felt for the Vietnamese and the indifference they so lavishly exhibit toward the Afghans doesn't have something to do with criteria of physical beauty.) Great beauties use their charm to get away with murder. As Fidel Castro has.

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the degree to which the passion American radicals of the 1960s and '70s felt for Cuba was, in reality, as much an erotics happily ratified by a dialectic as the other way round. Disgusted by their own country's sordid conduct in Central and South America, bedazzled by messianic dreams of collective and individual self-transformation, young Americans in significant numbers were mesmerized by a Cuba of their own humid imaginings. There was Fidel, bearded and exuberant; but, above all, there was Ché. Ché Guevara was not so much a man, he was a poster—the poster on your dorm room wall. He was a rock 'n' roll revolutionary, Jim Morrison with an assault rifle.

The Cuba of Fidel and Ché (politely, we didn't at the time inquire too closely into the fate of that proto-Ché, Camilo Cienfuegos) seemed like a perfect amalgam of Marxism and sensuality, hedonism and heroism. I can remember walking through the streets of Havana in 1969 and seeming, at almost every other intersection, to bump up against that famous poster of Ché in which, his long hair coursing over an op-art map of Latin America, he appeared to embody every longing. The legend always read, "We must create the New Man." That was quite a come-on in 1969. When Peter Max meets Malevich, and the Merry Pranksters enlist in the Paris Commune, it can get awfully hard to think straight. Cuba certainly didn't seem like East Germany with palm trees. It was a dream—and dreams die hard.

IT WAS NOT until 1971, 12 years after Castro came to power, that a significant number of Western European and North American intellectuals first subjected an act of the Cuban government to intense scrutiny and criticism. This was provoked by the censoring (and subsequent brief incarceration) of the most important Cuban poet of his generation, Heberto Padilla. Ironically, Padilla was by no stretch of the imagination a person whom one could seriously consider a counterrevolutionary. Indeed, he had held a series of official posts in the 1960s and had been stationed both in Western Europe and the Soviet Union. But his spare, sorrowful, nuanced lyrics had, by 1970, come to be viewed by the authorities as outside the acceptable limits of what a "new man" should write. As Fidel Castro had warned Cuban writers and artists fairly early on: "Inside the revolution everything; outside it, nothing."

The sordid reality about Cuba that the Padilla case exposed was that, to a considerable degree, Cuba *had* become East Germany with palm trees. (One is tempted to say Bulgaria, but it has them already.) In order to secure his release, Padilla was obliged to humiliate himself in the classic Leninist manner: he performed his public *autocritique*, and penned (or at least signed) a document in which he denounced friends, acquaintances, and sundry bystanders in the usual formulas. The Cubans had miscalculated: even in Greenwich Village and the sixth arrondissement, even in Vietnam-scarred 1971, the notion that K. S. Karol and René Dumont were CIA agents proved impossible to put over. An international committee of writers to defend Padilla was quickly organized. In part because it numbered many who had been sympathetic to the Cuban revolution—Sartre, Beauvoir, Moravia, Sontag, and Juan Goytisolo to name only part of the group—and in part because of the egregious nature of the Padilla case, the committee's efforts received an enormous amount of publicity and attention. Defenders of Cuba were, however temporarily, put on the defensive.

What began, however inchoately, in the affair of one dissident poet had the eventual effect of shifting a large body of sympathetic opinion away from unconditional support for the Castro regime. To be sure, none of the information that began to spread about Cuba was particularly new. It had been common knowledge among exiles in Miami and Madrid but, because of the source, had been almost universally disbelieved—much as if the information about the Gulag had come from Prince Youssupov. More and more, there emerged from behind the militant decor of Castroite propaganda the shadowy relief of a vast penal system, the widespread use of torture (particularly the withholding of rations), the systematic persecution of religious militants, homosexuals, and—history has its little ironies—hippies. The exiles had been right after all.

THE CASE of writers imprisoned in Cuba got, perhaps, the most attention. In part, this was a salutary result of the Padilla case; in part, a result of the way in which writers and writers' organizations can be mobilized if a few people are willing to keep at it. There was no difficulty in raising the cases of writers jailed or tortured in Turkey, South Africa, the Iran of the Shah, the Philippines of the Marcos family. What was interesting was that alongside these more obvious names (and, to be fair, those from the Soviet Union) another, less familiar one began to be cited—indeed, insisted upon—by such people as Nadine Gordimer, Susan Sontag, and Joseph Brodsky: a dissident, Catholic, Cuban poet, said to be half-paralyzed, named Armando Valladares.

To be sure, as pro-Cuban apologists such as the Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galleano never tired of pointing out, the case of Valladares was different in that he had become a poet after being imprisoned rather than before. Moreover, it takes nothing away from Valladares's importance, his heroism, or the cruelty with which he was treated, to concede that he neither was nor is a particularly good poet. But if his lyrics are unlikely to stand the test of time, his prison memoir, *Against All Hope*, will endure as one of the finest and most moving ac-

ARS POETICA

i

Poetry
begins in psychiatry
and ends

in carpentry; Christianity
was the
opposite

ii

The poet talks
hard, praying
backward to her-

self & finding
no Messiah
but ghosts, no

rock
but the work,
no truth

but in the word,
no power but in
form,

no Master
but the crafting,
no disciple

but the echo, and
only at her desk
a place to kneel

MADELINE TIGER

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counts written in our time of anyone's imprisonment and, equally, as what must be considered the definitive account of Fidel Castro's particular improvisations in dystopia.

Valladares was a university student working part-time in the Postal Savings bank (an adjunct of the Ministry of Communications) in Havana when, in January 1961, he was denounced as a counterrevolutionary, arrested, and, after a summary trial, sentenced to 30 years imprisonment. He was 23 years old and was convicted for his (avowedly) anti-communist *sentiments*, rather than for any individual act against the regime. In a way, Valladares was lucky. In La Cabaña prison, Castro's *epuration* was in full swing, with executions going on all night for months. Carlos Franqui, a former official of the Cuban government, confirms in his own memoir, *Family Portrait with Fidel*, the degree to which executions, often without trial, became commonplace. What started out as revenge in hot blood against Batista's death squads became, in time, the habit of Castroite justice. Given what was going on, it is almost surprising that a man as outspoken as Valladares, with his rigid Catholic views, lasted as long as he did. People were shot for a lot less in Havana in the first years of the revolution.

WHAT MAY have gotten Valladares in trouble with the regime seems, from his narrative, also to have given him the strength to endure during his captivity. Inflexibility, when based on principle and combined with modesty, gives a prisoner hope. The great prison memoirs are untinged with despair and *Against All Hope* is no exception. Toward his fellow inmates, Valladares is humble, and even generous to a fault. He is constantly contrasting their boundless courage with his own limitations, and there is more to this than Valladares's understandable wish that his book serve as a tribute to his comrades. For Valladares, courage was nothing less than a way of remembering. He writes:

> I realized that the only way to honor the memory of those heroes [executed by Castro's jailers] was to behave with firmness and integrity. My heart rose up to God and I fervently prayed for Him to help me stand up to this brutality, and do what I had to do. I felt that God heard my prayer.

It was this moving obstinacy in his faith that allowed Valladares to persevere. A fierce non-believer may want to smile, but might do well not to. Valladares meant what he said: when, after 20 years in jail, mounting international pressure both from writers and from French president Mitterrand impelled the Cuban authorities to offer Valladares his freedom, he refused. He would only accept release, he said, if his family was allowed to leave Cuba with him.

Valladares saw all there was to see of Cuba's prison universe, serving time in almost every Cuban prison. Because of this, *Against All Hope* is one of the most complete accounts by a survivor of life in a gulag. Only the Yugoslav communist Karlo Stajner, in his *7,000 Days in Siberia*, made an equally complete circuit and lived to write about his experience. Curiously, both books share the same almost magisterial calm, the same inability to wax indignant except on behalf of others.

WHATEVER the source, a lesser man could not possibly have endured the systematic brutality of Castro's prisons. Valladares's narrative is often unbearable to read. A prisoner on hunger strike begs, deliriously, for water; the guard pisses on his face. Beatings were an everyday occurrence in Cuban prisons: after a while, Valladares stops remarking on them. The worst torture, and the most widespread, seems to have been the systematic withholding of rations (and, it goes without saying, of medical treatment). In this Cuban methods as applied to Valladares seem very much of a piece with those Shcharansky endured—even to the point where both report having been "fattened up" when their release was imminent. Valladares's book has countless scenes describing the ways the prisoners were abused. One winter (not winter by Siberian standards, perhaps, but winter nonetheless), the prisoners were stripped and left naked for weeks. Soberly, with that curious aloofness great suffering can impart, Valladares records the terrible deaths of his friends.

It is typical of *Against All Hope* that Valladares should choose, in recording his last hours before release, to offer a long martyrology of dead comrades and, except in his capacity as memorializer, largely to exclude himself. The passage is worth quoting at some length:

> The hour of my departure arrived. The procession of several cars headed down Rancho Boyeros Avenue toward José Martí International Airport. The plane was scheduled for seven in the evening. The setting sun dyed the afternoon pomegranate red. My heart sent up a hymn of thanks to God, and I prayed for my family, who hadn't

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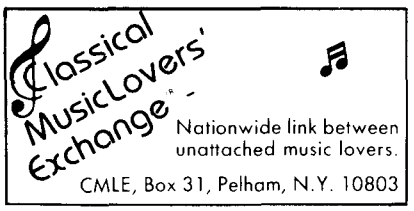

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been allowed to come say goodbye, and for my friends remaining behind in the eternal night of the Cuban political prisons.

As the cars sped along, a flood of memories rushed over me. Twenty-two years in jail. I recalled the two sergeants, Porfirio and Matanzas, plunging their bayonets into Ernesto Diaz Madruga's body; Roberto Lopez Chavez dying in a cell, calling for water, the guards urinating over his face and in his gasping mouth; Boitel, denied water too, after more than 50 days on hunger strike, because Castro wanted him dead; Clara, Boitel's poor mother, beaten by Lieutenant Abad in a Political Police station just because she wanted to find out where her son was buried . . .

The passage continues for several pages.

Either this mediocre Catholic poet, unworthy of the International PEN club's support, is the most creative, surrealist storyteller of the decade, or else he is telling the truth. In reality, much of what Valladares has to say is confirmed by interviews with the former political prisoners who got out of Cuba in the Mariel boatlift as well as by other memoirs, such as the one by Jorge Valls, and in a brilliant film about the anti-homosexual campaign in Cuba, Nestor Almendros and Orlando Jimenez's *Improper Conduct*. The facts, in short, are not in doubt. Valladares is telling the truth. What remains to be seen is whether those of us who gave the Cuban revolution its limitless moral overdraft are willing to accept the shame and discomfiture *Against All Hope* should by all rights provoke. And if examples of the lies the Cuban government told need to be recalled, one has only to consult the epilogue with which Valladares pointedly concludes his narrative. It consists of one quotation, appositely from Castro himself:

> From our point of view, we have no human rights problem—there have been no "disappeareds" here, there have been no tortures here, there have been no murders here. In 25 years of revolution, in spite of the difficulties and dangers we have passed through, torture has never been committed, a crime has never been committed.

I have no doubt that far too many people who should (and now can) know better still will want to believe Castro's denial, not Valladares's testimony. It is like the old conceit that a tree falling out of earshot makes no sound when it crashes to the ground in a forest. It is even understandable that decent people would not want to hear the bad news about Cuba—understandable but not, in the end, excusable any longer.

DAVID RIEFF

David Rieff is a writer and editor who is currently working on a book about Miami.

GAINING GROUND

Fighting Poverty: What Works and What Doesn't edited by Sheldon H. Danziger and Daniel H. Weinberg

(Harvard University Press, 418 pp., $27.50)

This collection of essays, edited by Sheldon Danziger of the Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin and Daniel Weinberg of the Department of Health and Human Services, represents something of a liberal counterattack on dominant conservative views of public policy regarding poverty. The counterattack is cautious and defensive, as befits the status of liberalism in the intellectual debates of the 1980s. But a counterattack it is. The authors of these essays direct criticism at both waves of the conservative critique of the War on Poverty in the 1960s—the neoconservative attack of the early 1970s and the supply-side conservative attack of the 1980s.

The neoconservatives argued that "nothing works," that anti-poverty programs threw money after problems, and that changing human behavior is harder than liberals imagine. Against that view, essays in *Fighting Poverty* suggest that while not all the anti-poverty programs worked, many worked quite well and others worked at least a little. The supply-side conservatives, represented in the area of poverty policy by Charles Murray's influential *Losing Ground*, argued by contrast that one thing *does* work, namely economic incentives, and that anti-poverty policy made poverty worse by creating incentives for family breakup and indolence. Against that view, these essays provide empirical evidence to dispute the purported links between AFDC and these evils.

Is it true that "nothing works"? That's an exaggerated view, the authors argue. For starters, one must distinguish between the poor who cannot and those who potentially could work. Among those who can't work, increases during the 1970s in Social Security payments dramatically reduced the incidence of poverty among the elderly; the Supplementary Security Income program introduced in 1973 helped the disabled. Second, the effects of anti-poverty programs on the poor in general have not been so unrelievedly nonexistent as the "nothing works" critique suggests. Medicaid improved the health status of the poor. Clearly, many (though not all) of the poor seem to have been able to take advantage of the government programs and civil rights legislation of the 1960s. The black middle class has grown, and the poverty rate among intact black families has declined precipitously. Overall, the poverty programs seem to have prevented the 1970s, a decade of great economic problems, from turning into a disaster for the poor.

In *Losing Ground*, Charles Murray presents a graph to show that official poverty rates remained unchanged during the '70s, after declining in earlier periods; at the same time, what he calls "latent poverty" (that is, the percentage who would have been poor without government transfers) increased. Murray's interpretation of his graph is that government programs increased latent poverty by creating perverse incentives, and that income transfers then only allowed the poor to run in place. But what Murray calls "net poverty," that is, the poverty rate after transfer programs including in-kind transfers (such as Food Stamps and Medicaid, the kinds of transfers the War on Poverty increased but that are not included in official poverty rates), actually continued to decline quite substantially during the '70s. An alternative reading of Murray's chart is that government transfer programs allowed the real poverty rate to continue its decline through the '70s, a time when bad economic conditions, which have a disproportionate impact on the poor, might otherwise have spelled significant retrogression. (The superb essay by David T. Ellwood and Lawrence H. Summers contains a demo-

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lition of Murray's idiosyncratic contention that economic conditions during the '70s should not have been expected to hurt the poor.)

As for the major non-transfer programs of the War on Poverty—compensatory education and job training—*Fighting Poverty* includes two interesting essays that, although they hardly celebrate these efforts as roaring successes, nonetheless complicate the view that they have been abject failures. There is no such thing, of course, as *a* training program or *a* compensatory education program. Hiding behind these general rubrics are scores of different types of programs with different methods, resources, goals, and clients. Some work well, some don't work at all. In their essay on job creation and job-training programs, Laurie J. Bassi and Orley Ashenfelter note that some intensive job-training programs for the disadvantaged, such as the Job Corps, do appear to produce "very significant increases in employment and earnings and reductions in welfare dependence, unemployment insurance usage, criminal activity, and out-of-wedlock births." The authors also report the interesting finding that job-training programs generally work better for women than men. In an essay on compensatory education that is especially interesting because its author is Nathan Glazer, co-editor of *The Public Interest*, Glazer again shows himself to be a careful, moderate commentator on social policy; he notes that studies done since the early '70s force a revision of the earlier view that compensatory education programs don't help poor children. More recent research indicates that some of these programs—notably Head Start but others as well—do produce gains during elementary school, although the gains fade by high school (where similar efforts have not been undertaken).

OF COURSE, for supply-side conservatives, as well as for Charles Murray, it is not at all the case that government policy doesn't work. Rather, it works all too well—in a destructive direction. The supply-side conservatives point to two important ways that the situation of poor blacks worsened during the '70s. Illegitimate births and female-headed households increased dramatically among blacks, and the proportion of young blacks in the labor force declined precipitously. These two facts together suggest a picture of hard-core poverty getting worse. And people such as Murray eschew the kind of cultural explanation for such problems that many of the older neoconservatives might have found more appealing. Instead, in the tradition of economists, Murray emphasizes incentives. The rise in welfare payments made it rational for poor people to avoid marriage and go on welfare rather than taking low-paying jobs; children growing up in welfare households grow up in an atmosphere of dependency. To liberate the poor, we must change the incentives government has put in place.

Three of the essays in *Fighting Poverty*—Ellwood and Summers's excellent contribution, as well as the essays on poverty and family structure by Mary Jo Bane, and by William Julius Wilson and Kathryn M. Neckerman—are critiques of Murray. Each involves a careful examination of the empirical evidence bearing on the plausible story Murray weaves. These essays take two tacks. One is to argue that some of the apparent deterioration in the situation of the hard-core poor is not as bad as it looks. The proportion of illegitimate births to black women has risen so dramatically not because unmarried women are having more illegitimate babies, but almost exclusively because the fertility rate among *married* black women has declined so dramatically. The growth of female-headed households among blacks parallels, albeit in an exaggerated way, trends in society in general. About half of the relative deterioration in the employment status of young blacks has been due to the increased black domination of the military service (people in the military are considered out of the labor force) and to generally bad macroeconomic conditions that have always had a greater impact on young blacks.

The second tack in these essays is to argue against some of the proposed causal connections between symptoms of deteriorating conditions and welfare policy. There is, for example, little evidence that AFDC encourages family breakup. As Ellwood and Summers report, there is no correlation between the level of AFDC benefits in different states and the proportion of black children in single-parent households. Furthermore, during the '70s, when the number of black children in female-headed households was rising dramatically, the number of black children on AFDC actually declined, a finding hard to reconcile with the view that women have illegitimate children to get on AFDC. Bane notes that, for blacks, becoming a single parent doesn't create poverty; most single parents were poor before having children. (The situation is different for whites.) And Ellwood and Summers point out that there is surprisingly little difference between the employment experience of black youth from two-parent and one-parent families, a finding that contradicts the view that single-parent families are an especial breeding ground for a culture of dependency. Ellwood and Summers thus conclude that the ringing rhetoric about perverse incentives doesn't hold up to serious analysis, that there is much about the problems of single-parent households and young blacks that we don't understand but that may involve societal cultural trends that are having a particular impact on blacks.

The tone and the content of this book are quite revealing of our contemporary situation. During the ascendancy of liberalism in the '60s, it would have been enough for a book on poverty to emphasize the *fact* of the continued existence of poverty in a wealthy society. The fact itself would have served as a source of outrage and rhetoric, of fire in the belly. The first wave of conservative criticism took the form of careful, skeptical neoconservative scholarship, puncturing the rhetoric and maintaining that the solutions were far more difficult than the rhetoric suggested. The essays in *Fighting Poverty* are intellectually comparable to that earlier neoconservative approach. They are fighting an ascendant conservatism that boasts soaring rhetoric, simple solutions. In criticizing conservative views, these authors adopt a tone of caution and care, and they argue that solutions are not as simple as the dominant view would have it. Clearly, liberalism is still in an early stage of intellectual recovery, a recovery that won't be complete until liberals recapture some fire in their bellies. That's one thing the essays in *Fighting Poverty* lack.

STEVEN KELMAN

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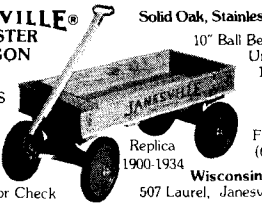

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CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 6*

questions about such matters as content and meaning.

I would point to his use of skin color and race. Is it conceivable that John Wulp's experimental theater program at NYU has *no* black performers in it, *no* Asian-American or Hispanic ones? It is surely by choice that Wilson has employed an all-white cast. Anyone who has seen this *Hamletmachine* would agree that the presence of performers of non-white ethnic origin would have blown apart Wilson's meticulously controlled universe, forced us to see the performers in the full richness of who they might be rather than through the fantasy of one white man's imagination.

It is premature to talk about "theatrical revolutions" if we are not willing to talk honestly about what we see and hear in a theater. It is good that Wilson be praised for his theatrical and visual originality and brilliance. It is bad that we cannot be more articulate about the dismaying absence of a deep and wide human compassion in his work.

NICHOLAS DEUTSCH
New York, New York

FREE-LANCE SCHOLARS

To the editors:

"One seldom comes across an 'independent scholar' anymore," observes Eugene Thaw in his poignant review of two volumes of John Rewald's best uncollected essays ("The Independent Scholar," June 30).

I've had the privilege over the past few years of searching out such independent scholars and trying to help gain recognition for their work. There's been notable progress: groups for self-support such as the Academy of Independent Scholars headquartered in Boulder and the Institute for Research in History in New York have burgeoned around the country, and the Rockefeller Foundation has established an annual awards program for outstanding achievement as an independent scholar.

We will be glad to provide information about these developments, and a listing of local groups throughout the country, to readers who send a self-addressed stamped envelope to The Independent Scholarship Project, 17 Myrtle Drive, Great Neck, New York 11021.

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Cutting Edge

NOW THAT I'VE reached my late 30s and have grown settled and bourgeois, I've been waiting anxiously for some new cultural phenomenon to come along that would confuse me or enrage me or gross me out. But nothing. Thirty years ago, a middle-class, middle-aged guy like me would have looked at a Jackson Pollock painting and said, "What the hell does that mess mean? My four-year-old could have painted it!" Twenty years ago, at my current age and station in life, I would have been ticked off by the Beatles: "Those long-haired jerks. How can you understand the words?" As a stolid burgher in 1913, I'm sure that I would have walked out on the first performance of *The Rite of Spring* or tossed down *Ulysses* in disgust. But where is the Stravinsky or Joyce or Seurat, or Jack Kerouac for that matter, of the '80s? My theory is that the baby-boomer culture still tyrannizes American life. New art seems familiar because it *is* familiar. Punk is just a minor variation on beat and hip. The Pet Shop Boys (admittedly, "West End Girls" is a great song) remind me of Danny and the Juniors. The Bangles ("Manic Monday") are aggressively '60s. Who's supposedly on the cutting edge? Andy Warhol, Courrèges, Mick Jagger. Still! Anyway, in the age of Reagan, new culture just isn't very important. Retro is all: The return of elegance, the return of the convertible, the return of this and that. And let's not forget the return of money. Which brings me to Cyndi Lauper. She is no longer cutting-edge, probably never was. In fact, she seems to have totally disappeared. Last August we listened to her tape ("She's So Unusual") nearly every day driving the station wagon back and forth to the beach. "Money Changes Everything" was the first cut. She had the right idea.

RON REAGAN, GIPPER *fils*, is not cutting-edge. But he is everywhere, famous for being famous. He writes, he acts, he dances. He does nothing well, but so what? He's on "Saturday Night Live," doing a pastiche of Tom Cruise in *Risky Business* dancing in his underpants; he's in *Playboy* as an author (a piece on May Day in the USSR); he's on the cover of a new magazine called *fathers*, being interviewed about his dad (Q.: "Is there an upside to being the son of a politician?" A.: "I don't know that there is an upside other than real external kinds of things, like you get to meet some real neat people."); and he's on the cover of the new *Vanity Fair*, looking like a fey George M. Cohan. Inside is an interview, not with Ron but with his agents. "My first idea for him was really the tackiest thing," says Michael Carlisle of the William Morris Agency. "At that time there was no male exercise book. And I said, Here's the book: *Stretch to the Right*. I had this idea of Ron versus Jane. And Ron said, 'You're crazy. I don't care how poor I am.' " He has standards. So here he is in *Vanity Fair*, in tight red underpants this time, and sunglasses.

THE PARTICULAR YOUNG person who is the talk of Washington these days is Len Bias, a 22-year-old basketball player for the University of Maryland who died of a cocaine overdose on June 19, two days after being picked by the Boston Celtics in the first round of the NBA draft. Is the cocaine culture cutting-edge? Hardly. Cokeheads are aggressively bourgeois. Wired, they think they can do whatever it is that they do—shooting baskets, analyzing leveraged buy-outs, writing books, convincing juries—smarter and better than anyone else. It's the drug of overachievers and, of course, suicides.

MOST OF THE Len Bias talk, though, is not so much about drugs as about the exploitation of young athletes by colleges. This is bunk. Bias wasn't exploited. He was given a chance to serve an apprenticeship for a job that would pay him millions of dollars. He also had a chance at learning something. Which he apparently didn't do. Five members of the Maryland basketball team—including Bias—flunked out last year. The real problem, of course, is that most of these jocks shouldn't be in college at all. To qualify for admission to Maryland, athletes need combined math and verbal SAT scores of 550. That's an average of 275 per test. Minimum score (just for signing your name) is 200, and the top score is 800. My suggestion is that colleges like Maryland skip the pretense and simply field professional teams to represent their schools. The college would play the role of sponsor; the players wouldn't have to attend class or be connected to the college in any way. This is how many semi-pro and even amateur softball teams operate. You can be the ace shortstop for Tommy's Exxon without working for Tommy. And think of professional teams: does it matter whether a fullback for the Cleveland Browns actually comes from Cleveland, or even lives there?

STILL, I KEEP searching for the avant-garde. Teen culture seems fruitful territory. I like the way kids dress, with pastel T-shirts and baggy shorts from The Gap or Benetton. I listen to my kids' radio stations (actually, I have little choice when they're in the car). And I go to teen films. I've seen all the John Hughes movies, including the wonderful *Sixteen Candles*. But the latest, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, which is a major hit in my neighborhood and which George Will has rhapsodized about, I find disturbing. In this movie, a high school kid uses high technology (computer, tape recorder, telephone) to outwit just about every adult he comes across—parents, vice principal, maître d', etc.—so that he can skip school for a day. To do what? Nothing. Just drive around, go to a baseball game, and swim with his girlfriend. There's no purpose here, and no angst. Ferris also makes no human connection: he clearly has no affection for his sister, his parents, his best friend, or his girlfriend (who wants to marry him, but he could care less). Hughes wants us to admire Ferris's disaffection; he's cool. But he's not alienated—far from it. He likes to watch the Cubs, and gets a big charge out of getting good service at a fancy restaurant. His nemesis, the principal, reminds me of the coyote in the Road Runner movies, always getting a bomb blown up in his face or falling off a mesa. He's too hapless to be menacing. The triumph of teenagers over adult authority is an old theme, but there used to be a point to the struggle. Today we have suburban (usually North Shore Chicago) kids faking out their parents so that they can throw a big party (*Risky Business* again) or go swimming. Bring back Sal Mineo. He was cutting-edge.

J.K.G.

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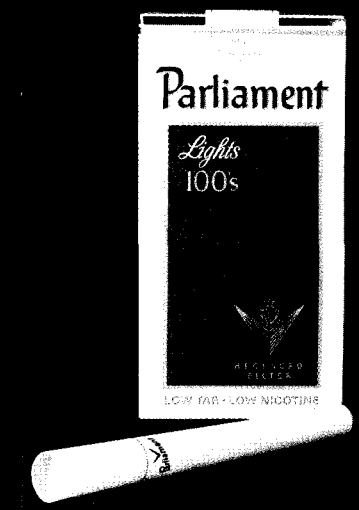

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